Walking With God

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WALKING WITH GOD

A Book for Daily Devotions, Arranged with a Topic for Each Week and a Sub-topic for Each Day.

By

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Published by

AUGSBURG PUBLISHING HOUSE

Minneapolis, Minnesota

WALKING WITH GOD
Copyright 1930
Augsburg Publishing House

Twenty-first Printing

Printed and manufactured in the United States of America
by Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis 15, Minnesota
. . . 6922 . . .

DEDICATED

TO THE MEMORY OF FATHER AND MOTHER, WHO BASED THEIR HOPE OF SALVATION ON THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST AND WHOSE CONCEPTION OF CHRISTIANITY FORMED THE BASIS OF A STURDY MORALITY.

PREFATORY NOTE

The initial impetus to prepare this devotional book came in the form of a request from the Board of Publication of my church. There has grown upon me more and more a sense of vast responsibility in preparing a book for the family altar, and I have been increasingly driven to prayer to God for the illumination and guidance of His Holy Spirit.

As indicated on the title page, the meditations for a given week deal with the same general topic, the meditation for each day touching upon some phase of the subject. It is hoped that in this way a certain momentum of interest may be developed and carried over from day to day.

May the Lord in His gracious goodness use also this effort for some stimulation to home worship and for the enrichment of the lives of some fellow-travelers in their walk with God, to the glory of the name of our Savior and King.

MARTIN HEGLAND.

Northfield, Minnesota,
September, 1930.

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INTRODUCTION

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom," is the word of St. Paul to the Colossians, and to Timothy he says, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The Word of God admonishes to meditate diligently on the way of salvation. To maintain the spiritual life established by the grace of God and His Holy Spirit, requires constant contact with God and His Word. Daily meditation on the wonders of God's grace, the need of grace and the call for daily following after Christ will ever give new strength and purpose to life through His Holy Spirit.

Often the strength of a man's life has been revealed when it has been found that he has daily sought his contacts with God in prayer and meditation. We need to open the windows of our lives toward heaven so that the purifying, refreshing and cleansing currents from that other world may penetrate our innermost being. Our times call for constant walking with God in His means of grace.

This little book of devotion is such a call to you to come apart and think on these things. These meditations seek daily to lead our thoughts to that invisible Kingdom where our citizenship should be. It is a call to lift up our eyes unto the hills, the hills of mercy and grace, from whence our strength cometh. The daily selections deal with personal Christian living, as well as the plan of salvation revealed by God in Christ. The means of grace, the church, personal responsibility and personal service in Christ's Kingdom are emphasized as we turn these pages.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." Our families and our homes must be grounded in the Lord. The center and head of the family circle must be the Lord Jesus Christ. Let the hearts of young and old in fellowship turn to Him for daily strength for daily needs. Take this book, and with a prayer for God's blessing, begin its use in the family circle.

To our young people I would say: Find time each day to

use the daily page in this book. It is not intended to take the place of the Bible but it may lead you to a greater desire that the Word of God shall dwell in your life richly.

May God bless this little book and may He, through His Holy Spirit, bless every one who makes use of it, that they may increase in that wisdom which makes wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ!

J. A. AASGAARD.

WALKING WITH GOD

SUGGESTIONS TO THE USERS OF THIS BOOK

Each meditation in this book is a unit in itself, but since the meditations are arranged in connected series, it is suggested that if, for any reason, a meditation is omitted on any day, it be included in the reading for the following day, so that the largest benefit may be derived from the principle of continuity.

It is also suggested that, in addition to the printed prayer for each day, free prayer be offered by one or more members of the family circle and that at the close all join in praying the Lord's Prayer.

First Week: THE BLESSEDNESS OF WALKING WITH GOD

January 1. A Precious Experience

"And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (Gen. 5:24).

This is perhaps the shortest life-sketch in the Bible. But how wonderfully significant it is!

Enoch walked with God. He not merely met God once or twice. He became well acquainted with Him. There developed an intimate loving friendship between Enoch and God, a fellowship productive of increasing holiness, steadying poise, victorious power, infinite peace.

So intimately did Enoch come into communion with God that after a presumably long and useful career the comradeship on earth opened into the more glorious fellowship beyond, without the agency of death.

Perhaps this latter experience is not for us, in exactly the same form, but "Walking with God" is a blessed experience possible for each one of us and holds within it stores of treasure for the life that is and for the life to come.

"Walking with God" is the title of this devotional book. It is intended to suggest that every day of this year upon which we are entering we should walk in a loving, trusting fellowship with God.

May this be the longing of our hearts:

> "O for a closer walk with God,
> A calm and heavenly frame;
> A light to shine upon the road
> That leads me to the Lamb!"

Heavenly Father, bless for us this year. May it be a year rich with the blessed experience of walking with Thee. May we begin each day in Jesus' name, and may we close each day with gratitude in our hearts and praise upon our lips. Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

January 2. The Promise of Light

The Word of God has much to say of the blessed experiences of those who walk with Him.

Today we are reminded of the promise of light upon the way: *"Again therefore Jesus spake unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

The darkness is often so heavy, the uncertainties so great, and the problems so many that we cannot find the way alone. But Jesus has come as the light of the world. He invites us to become His followers and assures us that His light will drive away the darkness, that His guidance will give us confidence in perplexity, and that His imparted wisdom will solve our problems.

Oh, how welcome is the flashing forth of earthly light in the midst of darkness! But how much more precious is the heavenly light that shines forth from the person of Jesus Christ! Into that light we may not merely enter, but .n that light we may walk all the way.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'I am this dark world's light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright.'
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my star, my sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done."

Lord Jesus Christ, we would come to Thee and have Thy light shine into us and all about us. We confess that we are afraid of the darkness of sin, ignorance, and superstition. We pray that Thy light may illumine the way for us so that we may walk safely and trustingly with Thee. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

First Week: THE BLESSEDNESS OF WALKING WITH GOD

January 3. No Condemnation

"There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus . . . . who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1-4).

Another gracious word for those who walk with God!

Condemnation because of sin; this is the cause of fear in the hearts of men everywhere. It is no invention of priests, nor a figment of the imagination. It is a stubborn reality. The smoke of sacrifice rising from ten thousand altars testifies to the burden of consciences troubled by the fear of condemnation. And there is ample ground for fear, for the wages of sin is death.

But to them that are in Christ Jesus there is no condemnation. They have passed out of the dark realm of fear into the joyous arena of freedom in Christ—freedom from the punishment of sin, freedom from the power of sin. They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. A new principle is controlling their lives. The love of sin is gone; the love of Christ has taken its place.

In this new relationship of grace men may walk confidently with their God.

"Redeemed, restored, forgiven
Through Jesus' precious blood,
Heirs of His home in heaven,
O praise our pardoning God!
Praise Him in tuneful measures,
Who gave His Son to die;
Praise Him whose sevenfold treasures
Enrich and sanctify."

O Lord, we praise Thee for the gracious promise of pardon through Christ. Help us to walk so consistently in harmony with the Spirit's leading that the joy of assurance may be our constant possession. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

First Week: THE BLESSEDNESS OF WALKING WITH GOD

January 4. Scripture Made Plain

Still another blessing that comes to those who walk with God is beautifully pictured in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke's Gospel, which records the experience of the two men with whom Jesus walked on the way to Emmaus.

The two were very sorrowful because of the death of Jesus, the meaning of which they could not comprehend. But He who they thought was dead, was walking at their side though unrecognized, and "beginning from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." At last their eyes were opened and they knew Him.

Such an experience has been repeated many times over in the lives of those who have walked with God. In communion with God they have learned to understand His Word. In the school of the Holy Spirit they have entered more and more deeply into an understanding and appreciation of the treasures of God's revelation. Especially has Christ been made clear to them—His person and the meaning of His life, His death, and His resurrection.

In words similar to those of the two on the way to Emmaus they have described their experience: "Was not our heart burning within us, while he spoke to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures?"

> "Divine Instructor, gracious Lord!
> Be Thou for ever near;
> Teach me to love Thy sacred Word,
> And view my Savior there!"

Help us, dear Jesus, to love Thee and the sacred Scriptures that tell of Thee. And give us eagerness to know Thy Word more and more fully, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

First Week: THE BLESSEDNESS OF WALKING WITH GOD

January 5. Progress

The practice of walking with God results in steady progress in Christian thinking and living. The apostle Paul had noticed this in the case of the Colossians, and, after thanking God for it, he prays that they may continue *"to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (Col. 1:10).

Walking with God registers progress in knowledge. Through Christian experience in the light of God's word we gain in insight, in understanding, in comprehension of our own nature and of the nature of God.

Walking with God makes for progress in holiness. With God as our Companion and Friend we shall be careful not to offend Him by going against His will. As we walk with Him, He will reveal to us constantly heightening and expanding ideals for our conduct. The stature of Christ will be more and more created within us. We shall grow in newness of life.

Walking with God stimulates to fruit-bearing. As we walk with Jesus in a contemplation of His beautiful ministry we are impressed with His ceaseless activity in doing good and we shall grow in desire to be like Him. The ideal of usefulness will grip our souls.

"Jesus, Master, I am Thine;
Keep me faithful, keep me near;
Let Thy presence in me shine
All my homeward way to cheer.
Jesus, at Thy feet I fall,
Oh, be Thou my all in all.

Jesus, Master, whom I serve,
Tho so feebly and so ill,
Strengthen hand and heart and nerve
All Thy bidding to fulfill;
Open Thou mine eyes to see
All the work Thou hast for me."

In Thy blessed name we pray. Amen.

First Week: THE BLESSEDNESS OF WALKING WITH GOD

January 6. An Invitation to a Conference

When friends go walking there is opportunity for pleasant and serious conversation. So, too, when God in this first week of the New Year invites us to walk with Him, He suggests a conference with us. *"Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord"* (Is. 1:18).

In these words we are reminded that we are reasoning creatures. God has given us minds, and it is His purpose that we should use them. We may apply them to the study of history, literature, science, to the problems of making a living, and to many another question that may arise in our lives. In the above passage God invites us to use our minds in a conference with Him.

He honors us by such an invitation. He places us in a class distinctly above the brute creation. We feel that in a way He elevates us to a plane on par with Himself. He has something He wants to say to us and talk with us about. He invites us to think about it with a view to reaching a conclusion as to the matter of conference.

Conferences among men have often determined the destinies of nations. Surely then a conference with God should be even more important. There should therefore be on our part a ready willingness to meet God in conference.

"Speak, O Lord, Thy servant heareth;
To Thy word I now give heed;
Life and spirit Thy word beareth;
All Thy word is truth indeed;
Death's dread power in me is rife;
Jesus, may Thy word of life
Fill my soul with love's strong fervor,
That I cling to Thee for ever."

Gracious Lord and Father, we praise Thee because thou dost honor us with Thy fellowship. Give us open minds and ready hearts to listen to Thy words of life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

First Week: THE BLESSEDNESS OF WALKING WITH GOD

January 7. The Subject of Conference

What is the subject of the important conference to which God invites us? The answer may at first seem disappointing, for God wants to talk with us about our sins. But His purpose in talking with us about our sins is not to leave us in a condition of hopeless despair. He makes us a gracious offer: *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Is. 1:18).

Snow and wool suggest the whitest of whiteness, and whiteness suggests holiness. God wants us to be holy. Sin is an abomination in His holy sight, and His judgment is upon the sinner who remains in his sin.

But not only does God want us to be holy. He Himself wants to take away our sins and the awful curse that rests upon us because of it. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "And the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

It is the glorious offer of the full forgiveness of all our sins through Jesus Christ that God wants to talk over with us.

That is why God reasons and pleads with us: "Come now and let us reason together." Every day this year God wants us to walk with Him and talk with Him, to receive daily the forgiveness of sins, and to grow in holiness and in the spirit of service. Surely we will not reject His offer.

May this be our confession and prayer:

> "Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
> Grace to pardon all my sin;
> Let the healing streams abound,
> Make and keep me pure within;
> Thou of life the fountain art,
> Freely let me take of Thee;
> Spring Thou up within my heart!
> Rise to all eternity!"

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Second Week: WHY ARE WE HERE?

January 8. A Supremely Important Matter

If we accept God's invitation to walk with Him throughout the year and talk with Him about the highest spiritual interests, there are certain preliminary questions of great significance which He submits for our consideration. This week we are invited to think about the question: "Why are we here?"

This is certainly a supremely important question to give attention to. Unless we know what we are here for, we shall not be able to arrange the affairs of our lives in the right way.

Each one has but one life to live. If a person discovers at the close of his life that he has lived it wrongly, he has no chance to live it over again. To be sure, if he discovers his mistake before it is too late, he can make a shift in his course and do better with the remainder of his life. But how much better to get started right in the beginning and avoid the worse than wasted time and the sad regrets.

Now since God is our Creator, our all-wise Father and Friend, there is no one so able to give us light on this question as He. The Psalmist's prayer, therefore, we do well to make our own:

> *"Teach me Thy way, O Lord;*
> *I will walk in Thy truth"* (Ps. 86:11).

Yes, dear heavenly Father, we greatly need to be taught. Let Thy Holy Spirit make very clear to us why Thou hast placed us in the world. Save us from thoughtlessness and aimlessness. Save us from frittering away our time and energy in such ways as shall leave no lasting benefits for ourselves or our fellowmen. Help us to get worthy ideals for our efforts. Help us to desire earnestly to learn the true meaning of life and to enter upon the way that leads to fulness of living. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Second Week: WHY ARE WE HERE?

January 9. A Pertinent Question

In order to stimulate clear thinking about the problem of why we are here, God puts to us today the arresting question: *"What is your life?"* (James 4:14).

Four short words, and yet what consequences for time and eternity hinge on our answers to that question!

Have you thought about that question, dear reader, as carefully as its importance deserves? What is your life? Is it an existence of more or less aimless activity bounded on the one side by the cradle and on the other by the grave? Is it an existence like that of a mere animal for which food and shelter are the only important problems? "No," you say, perhaps indignantly, "I have a mind which raises me far above the brute creation." Is that all? What about your soul? Have you provided an adequate place for its interests in the scheme of your life plans?

The question, "What is your life?" suggests something else. There are certain possibilities in every life. Are you living as large and rich a life as is possible for you? Are you using your talents? Are you measuring up somewhat to God's expectations of you? Or are you living a narrow life, neglecting your opportunities, and proving a disappointment to your Maker?

God asks you today to consider very earnestly: *"What is your Life?"*

Dear heavenly Father, let the searchlight of Thy Holy Spirit reveal to us very clearly the true character of our present lives. Help us not to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are something that we are not. Help us to an earnest and sincere self-examination as before Thy all-seeing eye. We pray Thee for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

Second Week: WHY ARE WE HERE?

January 10. Another Question

The kind of lives we live is shown by the kind of food we take for our nourishment. If all we crave is material food, we are living a merely physical type of existence. But a merely physical life is not a true human life, and no human being is really satisfied with merely material food. There is a hunger within which such fare cannot satisfy.

Listen to the prophet Isaiah's searching way of putting it: *"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness"* (Is. 55:2).

The prophet here clearly implies that there can be no real satisfaction in life unless the soul receives proper nourishment. It is the needs of the soul he has in mind when he extends the gracious invitation: *"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price"* (Is. 55:1).

Jesus raised the same problem when He asked: "Is not the life more than the food?"

Dear friend, what kind of food do you crave? Are you satisfied with merely earthly things, or is there something within you that cries out for the things of God? May the Holy Spirit lead you to join earnestly in the prayer:

> "O Bread of life from heaven,
> To weary pilgrims given,
> O Manna from above:
> The souls that hunger feed Thou,
> The hearts that seek Thee lead Thou,
> With Thy most sweet and tender care."

Yes, blessed Redeemer, give us a true hunger for Thee, and satisfy Thou our spiritual cravings with the heavenly manna. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Second Week: WHY ARE WE HERE?

January 11. God's Idea for Our Lives

In the consideration of so important a question as this. Why are we here? it ought to be of supreme importance for us to find out what plan God has for our lives. And if we inquire, we are not left a moment in doubt, for we read: *"God . . . will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:4).

Salvation is the supreme purpose of our existence. We are in the world for a little while before passing on into eternity. Our sojourn here is of the nature of a trial and testing of our relationship to God, and on the character of that relationship depends our eternal destiny.

There lie before us in eternity two possibilities and two only—supreme blessedness with God, or hopeless despair away from God. Now it is perfectly clear which destiny God wants us to have. "He will have all men to be saved." He loves us with an infinite love; He has sent His Son; He has done everything that could be done that we might be eternally saved. That is why we are here. Not to eat, drink, dress, have a little fun, and then die like a dog; but that we might here and hereafter have a share in eternal life. In His loving thoughts God has planned for us a wondrous life of fellowship with Him that shall not be broken by death but go on through all the cycles of eternity.

Gracious Lord, we can never thank Thee enough for Thy wondrous loving plan for our lives. Wilt thou guide us so by Thy Holy Spirit that we shall not resist Thy gracious purposes. Help us to realize daily that our sojourn on earth is but brief and transient. Grant that we may so use this period of testing and development that at the end of life we may enter into the glorious fulness of eternal life. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

Second Week: WHY ARE WE HERE?

January 12. The Test of Service

There is another standard by which we may measure life. "We are saved to serve." We are not here to trifle away our time in indolence. Life should be a service. But it makes a lot of difference what kind of a master we serve.

There are two masters bidding for our allegiance, God and mammon. We must make our choice, for Jesus says: *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"* (Matt. 6:24).

To be sure there are many people who are trying to do this—to live, as it were, a double life. They do not want to be counted with the world, yet neither have they wholly given their hearts and lives to God.

While such a divided life may be satisfactory to the devil, it is not pleasing to God. God wants our whole love and service. This is the way He expresses it: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself"* (Luke 10:27). And again: *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve"* (Matt. 4:10).

This, too, is the only kind of life that gives any real satisfaction to ourselves.

May this truly be our confession and prayer:

> "Thee will I love, my strength, my tower;
> Thee will I love, my joy, my crown;
> Thee will I love with all my power,
> In all my works, and Thee alone:
> Thee will I love, till the pure fire
> Fill my whole soul with chaste desire."

For the spirit of service we pray Thee, Lord. Save us from selfishness and laziness. Make us eager to do Thy will. We pray in the name of our Master, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Second Week: WHY ARE WE HERE?

January 13. First Things First

If we are here to be saved and to serve, these purposes should determine the program of our lives. They should give us a sense of proportion so that we do not make the little things big and the big things little.

One day Jesus was seated on a mountain side in the presence of a multitude of people. Looking into their careworn faces and knowing their ceaseless struggles for material things, He, as it were, lifted them up out of the maze of their activities, in order that they might see more clearly, and spoke those sublime words that have steadied the lives of God's people from that day to this: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matt. 6:33).

Here we have clear guidance as to our program. The things of God should receive our first and largest attention. And we can trust Jesus, for He loves us dearly and knows what will minister to our highest welfare. Such instruction is all the more pertinent in our day when through inventions and discoveries such amazing progress has been made in material things. We need to have our attention riveted upon the spiritual values that shall endure.

Would that we might have our vision so clarified and our wills so directed that we would put first things first.

Dear Father in heaven, teach us as Thy children to see the glory of Thy kingdom and to know the beauty of Thy righteousness. May the interests of Thy kingdom become so large to us that all things else shall be evaluated in reference to it. Help us to get the right emphasis in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Second Week: WHY ARE WE HERE?

January 14. What Is Your Answer?

Dear Friend, God has been talking with you this week about some very important matters. As of old, He has been speaking by His apostle: *"Let a man examine himself"* (1 Cor. 11:28).

God has asked you to consider very earnestly what you are here for, what kind of a life you are living. He has told you what His plan is for you. Now since the Lord loves you so greatly and has set these things before you, is it not the part of good sense for you to look into your heart and see what answer you have to give?

Is your life full of meaning? Do you find a deep satisfaction in the things you do? What kind of food do you crave? What master do you serve? Are you really happy? Or do there come times in the quiet of the night when you feel a great emptiness; when your life does not seem worth living; when you are thoroughly unhappy?

Remember that your Savior stands lovingly at your side willing to plant a great joy in your heart if you are not yet a Christian, and to give you larger life if you are a Christian. He wants to tell you that according to His plan you are in the world for a noble purpose that only in eternity will find its fullest realization.

What is your answer?

Let us lay the matter before God in prayer:

> "O God of mercy, God of might,
> In love and pity infinite,
> Teach us, as ever in Thy sight,
> To live our life to Thee."

We thank Thee, gracious Lord, that Thou art so greatly interested in us. Help us that we may be deeply concerned about the kind of lives we are living. Grant that we may come into the way of Thy plans for us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Third Week: LIFE IDEALS

January 15. Facing the Issue

This week God asks you to face squarely the question. What kind of a life are you going to live, if it is not to be a Christian life?

It is well to think clearly about this matter so that you may know exactly where you stand and what you are doing. Many people are trying to avoid the issue. They are not Christians, but neither do they wish to be classed as non-Christians. They try to remain non-committal, with a sort of vague intention, in the background of their minds, of making a decision some day. But that day seems a long time a coming.

Before religion can become really conscious and vital in a person's life, the problem of choice must be faced and a right decision be made.

Jesus had such an experience. We read: *"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil"* (Matt. 4:1). That was a time of significant testing for Him. The whole future of His career hinged upon the outcome of that trial. It was decision time for Him.

Friend, will you not face life's great question now and earnestly? If you decide not to be a Christian, let it be done in the full day-light of consciousness and awareness of the consequences. And if you decide that you want to be a Christian, why not enter at once upon the riches of an expanding life with God?

Help us, dear Father, to think clearly about life. Grant that we may not indefinitely postpone our decision on life's greatest question and thus rob ourselves of the joy and satisfaction that comes with a wholehearted surrender to Thee. Help us to give Thee our hearts. Guide us into the true life in Christ. Amen.

Third Week: LIFE IDEALS

January 16. Pleasure?

Three alternatives to the life with God were put before Jesus by the devil.

The first we may call self-indulgence or pleasure. *"And when Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto Him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread"* (Matt. 4:2-3).

We all have a craving for enjoyment and pleasure. We like good things to eat and drink, we like to have fun, we like to have a good time.

Now it is not un-Christian to enjoy oneself. God tells us again and again to rejoice, to let our hearts be glad, to shout with joy. But there comes a time when one must choose between pleasure and God. That is when pleasures either are sinful in themselves or threaten to become our god.

In that case is pleasure to be preferred? Is the biggest thing in life to have a good time with eating and drinking and cards and billiards and parties and dances and joy-rides and movies and jazz?

Are you willing, in favor of these things, to let God go?

Here is a word of God to consider carefully in this connection: *"Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment"* (Eccl. 11:9).

I thank Thee, dear Lord, because Thou dost desire me to be happy. Save my life from a wrong emphasis on pleasure. Help me to find the source of true joy and contentment. Above all things help me not to lose Thee. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Third Week: LIFE IDEALS

January 17. Fame?

The second temptation of Jesus may be thought of as a temptation to win fame and renown. *"Then the devil taketh him into the holy city; and he set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou art the Son of God, cast thyself down"* (Matt. 4:5-6).

Surely it would have caused a sensation if Jesus had leaped unhurt to the ground from the pinnacle of the temple. In terms of today, there would have been big headlines about Him on the front page of the daily papers.

Is fame the big thing in life? There are many whose ruling passion is just that. Almost everything in their program is consciously planned with this end in view. From the high school lad who works to get his name on the sporting page of the big daily to the prize fighter aiming at a world championship; from the college girl striving for first honors to the scholar who hopes to shine in the international heaven of science; from the young man scheming to become a popular college hero to the politician laboring to reach the Senate —all along the line the desire for fame is a mighty factor in human life.

Without a proper amount of ambition a person is not good for much. But what shall we say of fame when it becomes an idol? Is fame a god worthy of the consideration of the talents and abilities of a God-given life? Is it worth giving up Christ for?

It is well to think soberlv about these questions.

Dear heavenly Father, guard me against sinful ambition and false motives. Help me to develop and use every faculty Thou hast given me; give me a steadfast purpose to glorify Thee with my life and my service. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Third Week: LIFE IDEALS

January 18. Wealth?

"Again, the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:8-9).

Perhaps the most common life ideal of those who do not choose the Christian life is to get rich. Now there is no denying the attractiveness of riches. To be able to buy whatever one wants to eat or to wear or to amuse oneself with; to be able to live in a big house, drive an elegant car, entertain lavishly, travel extensively; to have power; to be looked up to by the whole community because of one's money—there is perhaps no normal human being to whom such things do not make a powerful appeal.

How about it? Money is certainly useful and necessary. But is wealth so great a good that, if a choice has to be made, you would choose to have riches rather than to own Christ?

Perhaps the best answer that has ever been given to such a question is the Lord's word to a certain rich man in one of the parables: "Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" The man thought he was rich, but in death he found himself infinitely poor, for he had to leave everything behind. What we are worth is determined not by what we leave behind us, but by what we take with us.

Save me, O Lord, from the ensnaring rule of earthly treasures. Help me to understand the danger and foolishness of making money my god. Hold before me constantly the higher values and the true riches. Grant that I may so own Christ by a living faith that I shall be rich for eternity. Amen.

Third Week: LIFE IDEALS

January 19. Selfishness?

Every life that is not Christian is in reality selfish. Desires for pleasure, fame, or wealth are various forms of selfishness. The Christian life is a surrendered life, and the great obstacle in the way to it is self.

Self says: "I am not willing to give God the control of my life for He might ask me to do something unpleasant. I want to make and carry out my own plans, follow my own inclinations, live my own kind of a career."

Is such a life better than a surrendered Christian life? Is there in it more vital meaning, more real happiness, more abiding satisfaction?

Well, this is what Jesus has to say about the matter: *"Whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it"* (Matt. 16:25).

That seems a paradox, but in it is expressed a profound truth. The selfish life is in reality the poverty stricken life; but the surrendered life is rich with the immeasurable blessings of God. Which will you choose?

"Go, then, earthly fame and treasure!
Come disaster, scorn, and pain!
In Thy service, pain is pleasure;
With Thy favor, loss is gain.
I have called Thee Abba, Father;
I have stayed my heart on Thee;
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather,
All must work for good to me."

Gracious Jesus, Thou who hast set before us the perfect example of unselfishness, save us from the curse of selfishness. Give us of Thy spirit that we may see the beauty of a life lived for Thee and for our fellowmen. Give us hearts willing to sacrifice. We pray in Thy own blessed name. Amen.

Third Week: LIFE IDEALS

January 20. Nothingness?

"Apart from me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). These words of Jesus sound very strange. Is He not saying too much here? Surely we can do something without Jesus?

Oh, yes, it is possible to get an education, make a living. and rear a family, after a fashion, without consciously getting help from Jesus. But in matters that have the quality of the eternal—and after all they are the only things that really count—we can do nothing without Him.

If one chooses then to live one's life apart from Jesus, it results, in the final analysis, in nothingness. Such a life is meaningless as clay, empty as a tomb, transient as vapor.

What a terrible experience to have to look back upon one's life and see written all over it "wasted"! A life given by God, destined for fulness of content and richness of joy, vaporing off into nothingness!

Is that what you would choose? Would you deliberately set out on a career that you know beforehand will result in total failure? Do you really think that you want to live your life apart from Jesus? God give you grace to see what that really means. May the Lord help you to see clearly that whatever successes you may attain to in life, your career is an utter failure, if lived without God.

Lord Jesus, Thou knowest the nothingness of a life apart from Thee. Help us to realize, before it is too late, our supreme need of Thee. Grant that our eyes may be opened to see more and more the joy of Thy fellowship, the illumination of Thy guidance, the strength of Thy presence. Hold us so close to Thee that we may live fruitfully and die triumphantly. We pray in Thy name. Amen.

Third Week: LIFE IDEALS

January 21. Profit or Loss?

When the books are balanced, do they show a profit or a loss? That is the question that interests the business man.

It is a good plan to apply bookkeeping principles also to our lives. Will our books show a profit or a loss?

To answer that question we must make an inventory. We must list and evaluate every item in our lives. That is what Jesus does in the challenging question: *"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matt. 16:26).

Jesus passes in review all the things the world has to offer, and finds that all of them together do not equal the value of a human soul.

How highly do you evaluate your soul? Is it worth ten years of fun? Would you exchange it for a column on the front page of a city daily? Would you sell it for a big limousine?

Now is the time to make your choice while the opportunities of life are still with you. If at the close of one's career the books show that the soul has been exchanged for anything, however valuable, they record an infinite, an irreparable, an eternal loss.

I thank Thee, O God, for the gift of my immortal soul. Grant me grace to see that it is more precious than all the glories of the world. Let nothing steal my heart away from Thee. Help me to discard all inadequate and wrong life ideals. Fix my heart and my affections so firmly upon Thee that the greatest joy of my life shall be to serve Thee and to glorify Thy name. Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Fourth Week: WHY BE A CHRISTIAN?

January 22. A Royal Estate

During the past week God has shown us the emptiness of a life away from Him. This week He points out some of the excellencies of the Christian life.

First of all He reminds us that as Christians we are His children. *"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God; and such we are"* (1 John 3:1).

Did you ever stop to consider what a wonderful privilege that is? If you are a child of the heavenly Father you know that He loves you with a greater love, provides for you with a more earnest care, and guards you with a more solicitous concern than any human father or mother.

And then think of this: If you are a child of God, you are also an heir to His Kingdom. We speak about wealth, but what earthly riches can compare with this heavenly treasure? We speak about positions of honor, but what earthly dignity can compare with the royalty of heaven?

A little black boy, brought to this country from an African mission station, sang with all his heart: "I am a child of the King!" By his song he most vividly expressed the wonderful privilege that is open to the lowliest among the children of men in being a Christian.

> "When all Thy mercies, O my God,
> My rising soul surveys.
> Transported with the view, I'm lost
> In wonder, love and praise."

Thy goodness, O Lord, is too great for us to understand. But we may thank Thee and praise Thee. Accept our gratitude for the royal estate into which Thou hast brought us as Thy children. Make us loving, obedient, and loyal to Thee in all things, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Fourth Week: WHY BE A CHRISTIAN?

January 23. Blessedness

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1).

The word "blessed" embodies in itself the very best things the human mind can conceive of; yes, it embraces far more than that. It includes the very best things God Himself in His great love has thought of for us. It includes true peace, joy, happiness in life and these blessings perfected in eternity.

For whom is this blessedness? For those whose sins are forgiven. It is sin that disturbs the peace of conscience; it is sin that robs life of its true joy; it is sin that spoils so many lives; it is sin that has brought sorrow, sickness, and death into the world. But for the Christian there is forgiveness of sin. There is a taking away of the guilt of sin and the condemnation resting upon him because of it. When this burden is lifted off his soul, there comes the peace of God that passeth understanding.

This is the glory of evangelical Christianity that it is a way of getting rid of sin. That is why the Psalmist can proclaim a true believer blessed.

"Come, then, all by guilt oppressed;
Jesus calls, and He would make you
God's own children, pure and blest,
And to glory He would take you;
Think on this, and well believe
Jesus sinners doth receive."

Help me, dear Jesus, to believe in Thee and to abide in Thy redeeming love. Help me to realize that Thou dost solve life's greatest problem, the problem of sin. Give me therefore grace to trust Thee for a full pardon, and plant Thou in my heart a grateful and eternal love to Thee. Amen.

January 24. Victory

Not only does the Christian have forgiveness of sins. He also receives power to overcome temptation. *"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"* (1 John 5:5).

We meet with temptation on every hand. The devil, the world, and our own flesh are always busy trying to seduce us. Many have no power, nor even a desire to fight against these allurements, and consequently so many lives go down in defeat, disgrace, and eternal ruin.

The Christian, too, is tempted, but he has within him an ideal which makes him desire to resist; and he has a power from on high which can give him victory.

What a splendid thing it is to see a young man with the strength of God in his heart walking straight ahead in the midst of fierce temptations, swayed neither to the left nor to the right from the path of righteousness! And how beautiful to see a woman ennobled by divine grace keeping her life sweet and pure, though the allurements of the world beset her on every side!

The Christian life is a victorious life.

"Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armor on;
Strong in the strength which God supplies,
Through His eternal Son.

Stand then in His great might,
With all His strength endued;
And take, to arm you for the fight,
The panoply of God."

Gracious God, we thank Thee for the promise of victory. Equip us for the battle with Thy power and we shall be strong indeed. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Fourth Week: WHY BE A CHRISTIAN?

January 25: Fulness of Life

There are some who believe that the Christian life is narrow and limited. That is all a mistake. "Christianity is not a matter of subtraction but of addition."

It is God's thought that the Christian life should be a rich life, filled to the brim with worth while things. Speaking figuratively of the sheep to whom He would be a shepherd, Jesus says: *"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"* (John 10:10).

And John testifies of Him: *"Of his fulness we all received, and grace for grace"* (John 1:16).

Paul's writings are permeated with the thought of the richness of the Christian life. Thus he prays for the Ephesian Christians *"that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God"* (Eph. 3:17-19).

Christian experience verifies these words of Scripture. Ask any true Christian and he will tell you that he would not exchange the contents of his life for all the things the world has to offer. Though he may lack many material things, he is living a life rich with the presence of God.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the possibilities of the Christian life. Grant us the higher wisdom that enables us to understand the spiritual values which the world cannot perceive. Teach us the superlative worth of Thy kingdom of grace. Help us to enter more and more fully into the riches of life in Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

Fourth Week: WHY BE A CHRISTIAN?

January 26. Profitableness

Some people will tell you that Christianity is all right when you come to die, but that it is no good while you are living. But God's word says: *"Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come"* (1 Tim. 4:8).

When Jesus urged men to seek the Kingdom of God first, He promised that such things as food, clothing, and other goods would be added for the Christian.

This, too, is verified by experience. The Christian virtues of honesty, faithfulness, industry, square-dealing are the very qualities that make the successful merchant, banker, farmer, artisan, or scholar. Look at the agricultural, industrial, economic, social, and educational rise of heathen countries after Christianity has been introduced. The improvements are so marked that support of missions is urged on this ground alone. This certainly is not the main motive in missions, but these forms of betterment constitute mighty evidence that it is profitable even in a temporal sense to be Christians.

There is no conflict between true Christianity and material success. The Christian idea of service is a good dividend producing principle.

Help us, Father, to see all activities in relation to Thy kingdom. Save us from a secularism that shuts Thy presence out of our lives. Lead us to understand that when we belong to Thee Thou dost bless and establish the work of our hands, that all things work together for good to them that love Thee. Give us a steadfast faith in Thy wisdom and goodness. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

January 27. Freedom from Worry

Worry is one of man's worst enemies. How splendid if we could get rid of our anxieties!

Well, that is just what our heavenly Father will do for us if we will let Him. He wants to remove from our lives all disturbing fears about the future. Listen to Jesus' wonderful words of assurance: *"Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? . . . And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; Yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious"* (Matt. 6:26-31).

By these words Jesus does not encourage sloth and indolence. Other passages of Scripture very definitely inculcate the qualities of industry and thrift. But what Jesus here does do is to encourage such an abiding faith in God that, having done our duty, we can let all worry go.

Such faith is possible only for the Christian.

> "If thou but suffer God to guide thee,
> And hope in Him through all thy ways,
> He'll give thee strength, whate'er betide thee,
> And bear thee through the evil days:
> Who trusts in God's unchanging love
> Builds on the rock that naught can move."

O God, we thank Thee for this wonderful assurance that we are the objects of Thy love and concern. Remove from our hearts all undue anxiety. Help us to be still and know Thou art God. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Fourth Week: WHY BE A CHRISTIAN?

January 28. Eternal Joy

Sooner or later every person comes to the close of his life. What will that end be for you? Will you find yourself in a state of defeat or victory? Will it be an hour of black despair or of triumphant hope?

For the Christian there is nothing to fear in death. It is for him a transition from a world of struggle to a kingdom of glory. Paul put it this way: *"The time of my departure is come. I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

For the Christian, death is to experience the surpassing joy of being with the Lord; it is an entrance into paradise. In one sense, it brings the soul into a longed-for rest; in another it marks the beginning of a larger life.

How splendid to be able to look back upon a blessed, victorious, full, profitable, worry-free life as a child of God and forward to the unrevealed glories of eternal life and to hear from the lips of Jesus: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

> "Lord, Thou hast joined my soul to Thine,
> In bonds no power can sever;
> Grafted in Thee, the living vine,
> I shall be Thine forever;
> Lord, when I die, I die to Thee,
> Thy precious death hath won for me
> A life that never endeth."

Wonderful art Thou, O God, and precious is the life with Thee. Give us increasing understanding of the excellencies of the Christian life. Help us to yield ourselves more and more to the purpose of Thy will that Thou mayest bless us for time and eternity. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifth Week: WHAT IS IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

January 29. Much Misunderstanding

"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18.)

During the past weeks God has shown us the surpassing excellency of the Christian life as over against the non-Christian life, and in His Word He urges upon all men to enter fully into the life in Him.

But here a difficulty arises. There is, even among supposedly well-informed people, so much misunderstanding as to what it is to be a Christian. Such misconceptions are serious hindrances in the way of beginning and of continuing the life with God.

This week, therefore, we are invited to consider this matter in the light of the Holy Spirit in order that we may be led to a true understanding of how to inherit eternal life—the most significant question that ever faces a human soul.

Let us try to approach the problem with an open mind, so that if we should find ourselves possessed of wrong ideas, we may be willing to let them go and be governed solely by God's revealed truth. The matter of our relationship to God is too important for us both in time and eternity to permit it to remain in a state of cloudiness due to misunderstandings. Let us therefore be eager for the light that comes from God.

O God, Thou seest what difficulties we have in understanding spiritual truths. Clarify our insight and make our purposes strong to let Thy light guide us into all spiritual wisdom. Relieve us of all false conceptions; save us from the fallacies of human thinking in spiritual things; help us to accept Thy revelations of truth. We ask this in the name of Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen.

January 30. Not Externalism

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

In considering the question as to what it is to be a Christian we shall look first at some things that it is *not.*

To be a Christian is not merely to hold membership in the visible church. A person may be baptized and confirmed and not be a Christian. He may be a regular church attendant and even go to communion, and not be a Christian; he may read his Bible and participate in the prayers of the church and not be a Christian; he may be a student at a Christian school and participate in voluntary religious activities, and not be a Christian.

Now please do not misunderstand. It is not contended that these matters that have been mentioned are not important in the Christian life. All of them are significant, and some of them are of surpassing value. But what it is necessary to emphasize is that the essence, the heart of Christianity is not in these things. Neither externalism, nor ritual, nor formalism constitute the real meaning of Christianity. It is not lip-service.

Help us, heavenly Father, to rid ourselves of all wrong ideas as to what it is to be a Christian. Help us to realize that we are not Christians merely because we conform to certain practices or participate in certain religious ceremonies. Help us to understand that the life with Thee is not a matter of mere outward performances. Give us by the help of Thy Spirit the power and grace to enter deeply into the true meaning of life with Thee, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Fifth Week: WHAT IS IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

January 31. Not Mere Abstinence from Doing Wrong

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and the platter; but within they are full from extortion and excess" (Matt. 23:25).

To be a Christian is not merely abstaining from doing certain things that you believe to be wrong. A person may abstain from drinking and gambling and not be a Christian. A person may abstain from dancing and card-playing and not be a Christian; he may abstain from coarseness and profanity and not be a Christian; he may abstain from falsehood and dishonesty and not be a Christian; he may abstain from vileness and impurity and not be a Christian.

Again let misunderstanding be cautioned against. It is not contended that abstinence from wrong-doing is a matter of indifference for the Christian; quite the reverse. The Christian will instinctively shun the things that are wrong. But it is important to make clear that the essence of Christianity is not a negation. It is not a prohibitive legalism, which says: "Taste not, touch not, do not do this, do not do that." Such a conception, taken alone, is a caricature of the Christian life.

Again we pray, O Lord, for clarity of vision. Help us that nothing may obscure a true view of a saving relationship with Thee. Give us grace to understand that being a Christian is not a mere human effort at reform, a putting away of this sin and that. Teach us that Christianity is a life which Thou alone canst give, and help us eagerly to desire it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifth Week: WHAT IS IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

February 1. Not Mere Striving to Do Right

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20).

Let us go further in our analysis of the Christian life. To be a Christian is not merely doing certain things that you believe to be right. A person may be a member of many church committees and do much church work and not be a Christian; he may sing in the choir and teach a Sunday School class and not be a Christian; he may feed the hungry and clothe the poor and not be a Christian; he may visit the sick and provide for the orphans and not be a Christian.

For a third time let misunderstanding be warned against. The Christian life will necessarily issue in good works; but the essence of Christianity is not activity, not service.

This conception of the religious life is the old work-righteousness of the Pharisees which Jesus condemned in no uncertain terms. We can never become righteous in the sight of God by what we ourselves can do. We are on the wrong track. We do not become Christians that way.

O God, Thou seest how everything we do is marred by sin. Help us that we may not put our hope of salvation in the works of our poor hands. Save us from the error of work-righteousness. Lead us into an understanding of the Gospel as a message of salvation based alone upon the merits of Christ Jesus, our Savior. Teach us to trust in Thy Grace, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Fifth Week: WHAT IS IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

February 2. A State of Grace

If none of the things we have considered the last three days constitute the essence of Christianity, what then in reality is it to be a Christian? Plainly and simply it is this: to stand in a relationship of grace with God. What does that mean? It means that relying on nothing of my own, I depend for my salvation upon the merits of Jesus Christ and trust Him as my personal Savior. It means that in faith I accept as a free gift the pardon of all my sins made possible by the death of Christ—*"In whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace"* (Eph. 1:7).

Do we get the distinction between this idea of Christianity and the misconceptions we have considered? Perhaps it may help to make it clearer if we say that to be a Christian is to believe something rather than do something. And as to the object of our belief we are not left a moment in doubt, for Paul says that: *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31).

That adult person is a Christian who has been baptized and who in faith daily accepts the forgiveness of all his sins on the basis of the redemptive work of Christ.

"Thy grace alone, O God,
To me can pardon speak;
Thy power alone, O Son of God,
Can this same bondage break.
No other work save Thine,
No meaner blood will do;
No strength, save that which is divine,
Can bear me safely through."

Gracious Savior, we thank Thee for the glorious truth that salvation is a gift from Thee. Left to ourselves our case would be hopeless, but in Thee we have a sure hope of eternal life. Help us to accept Thy wondrous gift of grace. Amen.

February 3. Growth in Holiness

But is there not more to the Christian life than the forgiveness of sins? Yes, there is; for one thing, growth in holiness.

The Christian does not receive the forgiveness of sins and then proceed willingly to sin again. When he contemplates the terribleness of sin in the sight of God and the tremendous sacrifice Christ made to atone for his sins, the Christian more and more desires to avoid sinning. This is an entirely different attitude to sin from that of the non-Christian who may also try to abstain from certain outward sins. For the Christian has within him a new nature. A regenerated heart by virtue of which he hates sin and loves holiness. *"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17).

Because of this new nature he sees things in a different light than the non-Christian and there is a love for his Savior within him which gives him power to abstain from sin and desire to grow more and more like the sinless One.

There is with the Christian not merely pressure from without. There is a motive power within working towards holiness.

"Oh, what precious balm and healing,
Jesus, in Thy wounds I find!
Every hour that I am feeling
Pains of body and of mind:
Should some evil thought rush in,
And provoke my soul to sin,
Thoughts of Thy deep wounds, from sinning
Keep me in its first beginning."

Keep me, Lord Jesus, in the way of holiness in gratitude to Thee. Give me a sensitive conscience quick to detect what is displeasing to Thee. Make my grateful love to Thee strong and steady that I may grow more and more like Thee. I pray in Thy name. Amen.

February 4. Christian Activity

There is still more to the Christian life. Not only does the Christian, receiving the forgiveness of sins, desire to abstain from sin and grow in holiness. He also feels a craving to express himself in Christian activity. He wants to have a part in the program of the church, he wants to engage in works of mercy with unfortunates of every kind, he wants a share in the great enterprise of missions, bringing the light of the gospel to the blind and ignorant.

But here again he differs in his activity from the non-Christian. For with the Christian there is the urge from within born of the grace of God in his heart. This is what Jesus refers to when he says: *"He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:38).

The Christian doesn't engage in forms of Christian service in order to be saved, but because he is saved. Nor does he do it because he has to, but because he wants to. His mind resembles that of Jesus: *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work"* (John 4:34).

"How blessed from the bonds of sin
And earthly fetters free,
In singleness of heart and aim,
Thy servant, Lord, to be!
The hardest toil to undertake
With joy at Thy command,
The meanest office to receive
With meekness at Thy hand."

Gracious Lord and Master, give me gladness of heart in serving Thee and my fellowmen. Help me to understand the wondrous privilege of being Thy co-worker in building the kingdom of God. Keep me loving and active for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Sixth Week: THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

February 5. A Spiritual Birthday

The Christian life begins in baptism.

In this holy sacrament God comes to the little children, gives them spiritual life, and receives them into the family of Christians. In the words of Luther's Catechism, baptism *"works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe, as the word and promise of God declare: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned'"* (Mark 16:16).

Older people, too, who have not been baptized as children, are to be baptized when they accept Christ as their Savior, as a sacramental sealing of their new estate. This is the Lord's specific command: *"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:18-20).

Baptism should therefore be a topic of absorbing interest to every Christian. An ancient Church Father on being asked what he regarded as the greatest day in his life, answered, without hesitation, that it was the day on which he was baptized. *"For,"* he explained, *"on my natural birthday I was born into the natural world, but on my baptismal day I was born into the kingdom of God."*

Yes, our baptismal day is our spiritual birthday.

My Father, I thank Thee for the wonderful blessings of my baptism. I thank Thee for the life it gave me, for the grace it imparted. Help me to rejoice in the knowledge that I became Thy child and an heir of eternal life. Keep me always faithful to Thee. I pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Sixth Week: THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

February 6. A Washing of Regeneration

If we ask about baptism, How can water do such great things? let Luther answer:

"It is not the water, indeed, that does such great things, but the Word of God connected with the water, and our faith which relies on that Word of God. For without the Word of God, it is simply water and no baptism. But when connected with the Word of God, it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says to Titus, in the third chapter:

"According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying."

That baptism is not only efficient but also necessary is asserted by Jesus Himself: *"Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* (John 3:5).

The use of water in baptism is full of meaning.

"It signifies that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance, and be put to death; and that the new man should daily come forth and rise, to live before God in righteousness and holiness forever."

In baptism we are face to face with a mystery, to be sure, which our little minds cannot fathom. But we believe the words of our Lord and gladly accept the blessings which baptism bestows.

We thank Thee, Lord, for this beautiful sacrament in which our souls are cleansed of sin and born again into sonship with Thee. Help us to realize the limitations of human thinking in relation to the working of Thy divine grace. Grant that we may not stumble in our faith because we cannot completely understand. Help us to trust and to believe, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

February 7. An Adoption

Another beautiful word that may be used to describe the significance of baptism is "adoption," in harmony with this statement of Paul: *"Ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"* (Rom. 8:15).

We know what adoption means. We may put it this way: It is an act by which a husband and wife become legally the father and mother of a child that is not their own by birth. Now by nature we human beings, because of original sin, are children of wrath, but in baptism we become by adoption children of God, so that we can truly call Him Father. (See Eph. 2:1-6.)

It is a real privilege for a poor orphan child to be adopted into a good home and receive there food, clothing, shelter, education, and love. But think of the infinite privilege of being adopted into the family of our heavenly Father. There with our brothers and sisters in the Lord, we may enjoy all the good things of the Father's house and be constantly the objects of His providential care and tender love. There is no servile fear of a hard master, but a loving trust in a gracious Father.

And then this wonderful blessing of being by adoption heirs to eternal life!

O God, we cannot measure the extent of Thy grace in baptism. We can but accept it as a wondrous gift, and rejoice that we have been brought into Thy blessed family. Teach us the privileges of the Father's house, and help us to do nothing to bring shame and dishonor upon the name we bear. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sixth Week: THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

February 8. Grafted into Christ

In the baptismal ritual the sponsors are instructed as follows: "As sponsors for this child you are to be witnesses that it has been baptized in the Name of the Holy Trinity. You are also to remember it before God in prayer; and, if the parents die before it shall have reached the age of discretion, you shall as far as possible see that it is instructed in the Catechism, so that in riper years it may abide in Christ even as now through baptism it has been grafted into Him."

Note this expression about baptism that is full of meaning, "grafted into Him." When a branch is grafted into a tree, the life sap of the tree flows into the branch enabling it to bear leaves, flowers, and fruit. So when a soul in baptism is grafted into the living tree, Christ, His life, spirit, and power flow into that soul, sustain it, and make it productive.

Jesus speaks of this relationship: *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you"* (John 15:5-7).

For this great truth we thank Thee, Lord. We thank Thee for the life-union established between Thee and us in baptism, so that life abundant may be our experience. Help us to draw upon Thy resources that we may be vigorous and fruitful branches upon the living tree. Help us always to abide in Thee. Amen.

Sixth Week: THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

February 9. Into Christ's Death

"Are ye ignorant that all who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" (Rom. 6:3).

Here we have a strange expression, *"baptized into Christ's death."* But it carries a deep meaning. When we are baptized into Christ, we enter into such intimate fellowship with him that we become participants with Him in everything—in His crucifixion, His death, His burial, His resurrection.

Upon this fact it is that Paul builds his masterly argument for deadness to sin and growth in holiness. Meditate thoughtfully on this phase of the effect of baptism. *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin"* (Rom. 6:1-6).

Dear Lord and Savior, make real to us the meaning of this wonderful union with Thee. Grant that we may be dead to sin, that it may have no compelling power over us. Give us instead a love for the holy things, the pure and lovely things, the things that belong to the Christ-like life. We pray in the name of the risen Lord. Amen.

Sixth Week: THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

February 10. The Baptism of Children

But should little children, who do not know what is being done to them, be baptized?

Well, let us note these facts. First, every soul needs to be born again. This truth is clear from Jesus' words to Nicodemus, which we have already noted, and from many other passages of Scripture. If this were not true, what would be the need of the whole costly plan of salvation?

In the second place, baptism is a real means of regeneration. This too we have already noted. It is a sacrament through which a supernatural regenerating work of grace takes place.

Thirdly, let us bear in mind always that spiritual life is a gift of God, not depending at all on our own efforts. Now, to whom, pray, can God more easily give the gift of spiritual life than to a child who offers no conscious resistance? It is a matter of almost daily observation that gifts are given to children, even to infants. By a document, called a will, or by adoption proceedings, even an infant child may be made the owner of a bank or a farm. Why should it be thought impossible for God to give a spiritual gift to a child without his knowledge? Finally, there is the definite word of Jesus: *"Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not; for to such belongeth the kingdom of God"* (Mark 10:14).

Dear Lord Jesus, help us that we may not stand in the way of any little one coming to Thee. Thou hast abundantly made known Thy love and concern for the children. Give us of Thy spirit that we may bring them trustingly to Thee in the Holy Sacrament. We pray in Thy own saving name. Amen.

Sixth Week: THE MEANING OF BAPTISM

February 11. A Covenant

"My covenant will I not break,
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips"
(Ps. 89:34).

In baptism God establishes a covenant with the soul, pledging it the forgiveness of sin, spiritual power, and eternal life. This covenant God never breaks.

We may shut ourselves out from the benefits of the covenant by unbelief, disobedience, or neglect. But we may know assuredly that if we return from our straying, God stands ever ready to receive us back into the saving fellowship with Him. As a loving Father He waits with open arms for the prodigal's return.

The thought of such a covenant steadies us when the storms of temptation sweep about us, and beckons us back when we fall.

Surely, then, Baptism confers wonderful blessings. Through it we receive a new life and become true children of God. Our sins are washed away, and we receive a new power for holiness. God establishes an eternal covenant with us, assuring us always of His gracious Father love.

Who would look lightly upon so gracious a Sacrament and who would dare to deny it to children? May God help us to see it as it is, a precious means of grace.

We unite our hearts in thanks to Thee, O God, for the rich blessings that come to us through holy baptism. Keep us mindful of our baptismal covenant that we may not willfully depart from Thee and thus lose our blessings as Thy children. May we be faithful and true all our days, through the help of Jesus our Savior. Amen.

Seventh Week: CHRISTIAN NURTURE

February 12. Princes and Princesses

There are some parents who, when they have had their children baptized, seem to think they have fulfilled their whole spiritual duty towards them. This is a sad mistake.

And what joys such parents cut themselves off from. Here they are with God's princes and princesses in their homes to care for and tend. *"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God; and such we are"* (1 John 3:1).

What possibilities for time and eternity are bound up in those little lives! What beauty of character, what nobility of soul, what deeds of service to God and humanity! Yet many parents seem to see nothing in their children but little animals of restless activity, and do little or nothing in the way of training them for the highest life.

And how is it with you, teacher? Do you see in the little child an heir to the Kingdom, whom it is your privilege to teach and train for royal station?

How infinitely it ennobles the work with children to remember that we are dealing with kingly sons and daughters, the possessors of immortal souls, and candidates for heavenly glory!

"Children of the heavenly King,
As ye journey, sweetly sing;
Sing your Savior's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways."

Our Father in heaven, we thank Thee for the children. Help us to see them as they are, children of Thine, and help us to show them Thy wondrous love in Jesus Christ. Help us to realize the privilege of having them in our homes and in our schools. Make us conscious, too, of our tremendous responsibilities for their precious souls. Give us much of Thy love and wisdom. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Seventh Week: CHRISTIAN NURTURE

February 13. Tender Care

"Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nourish them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Where there is young life there must be care. In baptism the child has received a new spiritual life. But it is only in the germ. If it is to develop and flourish, it must be cherished with great care. As the physical so also the spiritual life of the child must be carefully tended if it is not to die. Above all it must be fed. It is only dead things that do not require food.

It is because parents neglect the spiritual feeding of their children that so many die in spiritual infancy. Our hearts are at times torn by the terrible accounts of starving children in stricken lands throughout the world. It is not less, but even more, terrible to think of the spiritual famine that is taking its awful toll of lives each year. There are literally millions of people baptized as children who are walking the earth spiritually dead because they have been spiritually starved.

May the Lord be merciful to us because of our frequent neglect and may we be aroused to more solicitous care for the children. May we earnestly join with them in the prayer:

> "Savior, like a shepherd lead us,
> Much we need Thy tenderest care:
> In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,
> For our use Thy folds prepare;
> Blessed Jesus, Blessed Jesus,
> Thou hast bought us, Thine we are."

Good Shepherd, make us very earnest and very anxious for the little children. Help us to tend them as the lambs of the flock. Give us grace to pray for them, to nourish them, and to protect them from evil because they are Thine. Amen.

Seventh Week: CHRISTIAN NURTURE

February 14. The Bread of Life

God has made ample provision for our spiritual nourishment. As manna was miraculously given the Israelites as food for their bodies in the wilderness, so Christ has become food for our souls. He says: *"I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever"* (John 6:51).

So absolutely is our spiritual life dependent upon our right relationship to Jesus that He speaks of this fellowship in terms of eating Him.

Now this food is also to be given to little children. To begin with it must be in the form of "the milk of the Word." How blessed to tell the children about Jesus, His birth in the manger, the angels' song, the visits of the shepherds and the wise men, His visit to the temple at the age of twelve, about how He went everywhere doing good, how He received and blessed little children, and how at last He died to save us! And how eagerly the little children drink it all in!

For those who haven't the ability to tell about Jesus in their own words there are many helpful books of Bible stories for children. Get one and feed the soul of your little boy or girl. Do not wait until the child is old enough to go to Sunday school, and do not, by throwing the whole responsibility on the church school, deprive yourself of the privilege and joy of giving your own child the Bread of Life.

> "Bread of our souls, whereon we feed,
> True manna from on high;
> Our guide and chart, wherein we read
> Of realms beyond the sky."

We thank Thee, Father, for the ample provision Thou hast made for the spiritual nourishment of little children. Grant that, in Thy spirit of love, we may tell them of their blessed Savior and teach them to love Him. In His name we pray. Amen.

Seventh Week: CHRISTIAN NURTURE

February 15. A Divine Command

We have a specific command from Christ to educate in Christian truth. *"Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you"* (Matt. 28:19-20).

We have here the Great Commission of Christian education as well as of baptism and Christian missions.

When the Lord commands, we cannot do as we please about a matter. We have but one course to pursue and that is to obey. Otherwise we fall from grace and lose our standing as children of God.

The Lord knows the needs of His church on earth, and when He has given the order to teach, we may be absolutely sure that it is a wise and necessary injunction. How else can the individual or the church grow, develop, and be established except through systematic teaching under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? We believe that teaching is necessary in every other line where we expect to make progress; then why should not the principle apply in the progress of Christianity? Yet there are many professedly good Christians who seem absolutely indifferent to the great and fundamental work of Christian education. Have we not much to ask pardon for on this point?

Forgive us, dear Lord, for our neglect in obeying Thy command. Make us more zealous for Christian education. Help us to see the significance for time and eternity of teaching the children about Thee. Make us very wise, very loving, and very patient in instructing the children. Let us pattern our teaching after Thine, Lord Jesus, and let us be guided by the instruction of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Seventh Week: CHRISTIAN NURTURE

February 16. Another Command

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul; and ye shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall ***teach them to your children,*** *talking of them, when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates; that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which Jehovah sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth"* (Deut. 11:18-21).

Can anyone read this Word of God to Israel by His servant Moses without being tremendously impressed with the necessity of instructing children in the Word of God? With Israel the work was necessary in order to keep the people clear-eyed and strong-purposed to resist the heathenism round about them. And let it be said with all emphasis that unless Christian education is adequately provided for in our day, our descendants will assuredly be enveloped in the darkness of a new heathenism.

"God's Word is our great heritage,
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor:
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay;
Lord grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure,
Throughout all generations."

We thank Thee, precious Lord, for our spiritual heritage. Help us to guard it jealously and to transmit it undiminished to our children. Save us from spiritual ignorance and decay. Make us zealous for Thy word of truth, for the sake of our blessed Savior. Amen.

Seventh Week: CHRISTIAN NURTURE

February 17. The Christian Teacher

The Christian teacher has a great work to perform. Whether it be in a Sunday school or a week-day school of religion, the Christian teacher stands in the presence of immortal souls, bought by the precious blood of Christ, who are to be guided in the way of eternal life. He is handling the most precious thing in the world, the Word of God. It is a work that no one dare approach lightly or carelessly.

While it is a gravely responsible task, it is also a blessed work to tell the children about Jesus and His love. Even if appreciation of men is not very great, be assured that the labor is recorded in heaven.

For such a great and blessed work the Christian teacher needs all possible help and inspiration. The teacher should have careful training in subject matter and methods. But the greatest help can come only by keeping close to Christ. The Bible should and must be a subject of constant study and meditation. *"Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"* (Rom. 2:21.)

A steady prayer life, too, is essential to growth in grace and enthusiasm for the holy task.

Blessed is the teacher who comes from a study of the Word in the prayer chamber to the teaching of his class, who has himself gone to school in the school of the Holy Spirit, who has been much with Jesus and has learned of Him.

"Holy Jesus! Fountain streaming
Of holiness and grace redeeming,
As clear as crystal, pure and free;
Cherubim in robes of whiteness
And seraphim in all their brightness
Are darkness when compared with Thee;
Be Thou my pattern bright,
My glory and delight, Holy Savior!
O teach Thou me, that I may be
All pure and holy, like to Thee."

Amen.

Seventh Week: CHRISTIAN NURTURE

February 18. The Motive

"Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs" (John 21:15).

When Jesus was about to entrust to Peter the task of feeding and tending His lambs and sheep, He required Peter three times to give assurance of his love to Him. Love is the true and enduring motive in Christian teaching.

Real success in such work at home or in school will not come because one is interested in children in a general way. Such interest is very good, but love to Christ is even more important. If one loves Christ, he cannot help loving also the children whom Jesus so dearly loves and for whom He died.

If this love is in the heart, the teacher will persevere in his noble work even though remuneration be small or none at all, even if his efforts do not seem to be appreciated, and even if the fruits seem small or altogether lacking. He knows that his work is to sow the seed of truth and that the work is approved by God. So in earnest consecration he goes steadily on, knowing that the Lord in His good time will bless the sowing with an eternal fruitage.

Let all who would truly serve join in a prayer of dedication:

"Jesus, Master, wilt Thou use
One who owes Thee more than all?
As Thou wilt! I would not choose;
Only let me hear Thy call.
Jesus, let me always be,
In Thy service, glad and free."

Blessed Savior, let my love to Thee be always radiant. Grant that it may carry me over many hard places and sustain me in many discouraging moments. May it make me always earnest in the presence of children. I pray for Thy constant help. Amen.

Eighth Week: CONFIRMATION

February 19. A Significant Event

"And Jesus' parents went every year to Jerusalem at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up after the custom of the feast; and when they had fulfilled the days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and his parents knew it not; but supposing him to be in the company, they went a day's journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: and when they found him not, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking for him. And it came to pass, after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both hearing them, and asking them questions: and all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and he was subject unto them: and his mother kept all these sayings in her heart" (Luke 2:41-51).

Let us keep this deeply significant event in the life of the boy Jesus before us this week as we meditate upon the thoughts that cluster around the rite of confirmation and its meaning in the life of a young person.

We thank Thee, Lord Jesus, for the beautiful example of Thy love for Thy Father's house, and for the example of Thy understanding of spiritual things. May the youth of our day take Thee as their ideal. May they learn many lessons from Thee. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Eighth Week: CONFIRMATION

February 20. A Critical Time

Children in Christian homes take their religion as a matter of course. Through instruction and training by parents, teachers, and pastors under the guidance of the Holy Spirit the religious life of the young Christian is being shaped. Through the early years the child is largely unconscious of this divine work.

But sooner or later, usually during the years from twelve to sixteen, the child awakens to a definite consciousness of his religious life. He begins to think about his personal relationship to God. His visit to the temple at the age of twelve seems to have marked an experience something like this in the child life of Jesus. *"Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?"* (Luke 2:49.)

Such a time is critical for many young people. It falls in with the early period of adolescence, when the young person is experiencing great changes physically, mentally, and socially. He is growing up. New forces, impulses, and motives are stirring within him. New temptations beset his path, and battles are being fought within, of which the outside world often knows nothing. This age is also a period of lofty aspirations and noble purposes.

This critical time is therefore heavy with possibilities for good or for evil. Which way the child will go depends largely upon the understanding, wisdom, and love of parents, teachers, pastors, and friends.

Bless, O Lord, the young people who are passing through the period of temptation and struggle. Keep them clear-eyed and pure-hearted. Help them to contemplate the highest ideals. Save them from the pitfalls of sin. And help us, O Lord, who are entrusted with the guidance of youth to be very wise and understanding. Help us to lead aright. We pray in Jesus' name Amen.

Eighth Week: CONFIRMATION

February 21. Spiritual Awakening

"When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: Now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11).

If a baptized child has been brought up in a Christian home properly guided, spiritually fed, and trained in the prayer life, and has not fallen into wilful sin, we have a right to think that the young person is a Christian when he arrives at the period of early adolescence.

The religious experience such a child then goes through may properly be called a spiritual awakening, a coming to consciousness of his relationship to God. It is a passing over from a religious life taken for granted to a religious life consciously lived.

Questions as to whether or not he is a Christian will usually arise, and in many cases what the young person needs most of all is definite assurance that he is a child of God. He should be reminded that he became a child of God in baptism, and that he is still a child of God if he has not departed from that relationship.

He should, however, be helped to see that because of his sin he stands in need of the grace of God in Christ. Such a realization will lead him to seek the forgiveness of sins through prayer. He should also be assured that he receives such forgiveness as a free gift of God through Christ.

O God, we plead for the young who are awakening in their religious life. Lead them into a full, trusting faith in Thee. Give them appreciation of what Thou hast done for them in baptism, in Christian instruction and guidance. Grant that their lives may blossom out into all the beauty of positive and consistent Christian living. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Eighth Week: CONFIRMATION

February 22. Renewal of Baptismal Covenant

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccl. 12:1).

The Church has wisely utilized the period of spiritual awakening in early youth for the beautiful and significant rite of confirmation. The child is thus given an opportunity to renew by his own conscious act the covenant with God, into which he was admitted in baptism, and to receive the blessing of the church.

It should be plain that, after due instruction and guidance, no person should be compelled to be confirmed against his will. For confirmation involves in effect a confession that the young person is a Christian and wants to continue to be one. For a person, therefore, who knows that he is not, or does not want to be, a Christian to make the confirmation confession is publicly to testify to a lie.

But for the young person who acts voluntarily the confirmation service is of immeasurable value. He may still be largely a child in his religious consciousness, but the making of a public confession serves to strengthen him in his Christian purposes and gives him a precious memory to steady him in many an hour of severe temptation.

O God, we pray for the confirmants. May they approach confirmation day with serious thoughtfulness. May they examine their own hearts and lives and may they be led to a more and more wholehearted consecration to Thee. Help them to resolve in their own hearts to make their very own the confession and the promises made for them in baptism. Make them conscious and willing Christians. We pray Thee for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Eighth Week: CONFIRMATION

February 23. Preparation

"Train up a child in the way he should go,
And even when he is old he will not depart from it"
(Prov. 22:6).

It goes without saying that so solemn a rite as confirmation should not be entered into without proper preparation and training. The Lutheran church stands for the principle of thorough instruction in Christian truth preparatory to confirmation. This period is a blessed time for the young person. His impressionable soul is being acted upon by the Spirit through the Word. He feels the power of holy things; he is drawn to his loving Savior; he is lifted above the commonplace by unselfish devotion to lofty purposes; he experiences the exhilaration of great ideals.

What a wonderful opportunity the pastor has in the confirmation class! He comes into spiritual relationship with the young person more intimately oftentimes than that of the child's own parents. The clay of great possibilities is in his hands to mold. Fortunate that youth who has as his pastor during this period a thoroughly consecrated man of God, who understands the nature of youth, and is often found at the throne of grace in intercession for his class.

Let us all remember the young people preparing for confirmation.

"Gentle Savior, they are Thine,
Thou wilt never lose them;
May Thy life and love divine
Melt their tender bosom.
Lord, we pray
That they may
All like Thee, be holy,
Loving, meek, and lowly."

Our loving heavenly Father, lead the young confirmants into the way of true joy and happiness. May their love to Thee grow stronger and stronger. May they experience the real satisfaction of walking with Thee in their youth. Grant our prayers for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Eighth Week: CONFIRMATION

February 24. The Day

"Choose you this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24: 15).

Is there a single confirmed person whose heart does not beat a little faster at the thought of confirmation day? Wearing for the first time a new suit of clothes, or a new dress, surrounded by a festive congregation that crowded the church, having sung the hymns you had learned to love, having answered the questions in the catechization, and having heard the precious words of life that came from the lips of your beloved pastor, you stood at last before the altar. Your name was spoken, and the solemn questions were addressed to you:

"Dost thou renounce the devil, and all his works, and all his ways?"

"Dost thou believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?"

"Wilt thou, by the grace of God, continue steadfast in this convenant of thy Baptism, even unto the end?"

Perhaps the voice with which you made answer was a bit weak and shaky, perhaps your lips trembled a little, but you made a good profession before many witnesses, and you gave your pastor your hand in token thereof. You were conscious of a solemnity that made an indelible impression upon your soul; and to your dying hour you will not forget your confirmation day.

Shall we not each of us pray again the prayer of that day:

> "My God, accept my heart this day,
> And make it always Thine,
> That I from Thee no more may stray,
> No more from Thee decline.
>
> Anoint me with Thy Spirit's grace,
> And seal me for Thine own;
> That I may see Thy glorious face,
> And worship at Thy throne."
>
> **Amen.**

Eighth Week: CONFIRMATION

February 25. The Blessing and the Prayer

How reassuring after having given your vows in confirmation to have your pastor lay his hand upon your head, as you knelt before the altar, and pray: "May the triune God, who in holy baptism, hath adopted thee as His child and hath made thee an heir of eternal life, preserve thee in the grace of thy baptism, and grant thee steadfastness in thy faith to the salvation of thy soul. Amen."

In that solemn moment your heart was very tender, and God seemed so near to you that you could feel His very presence. There was strong within you a longing and a prayer that you might always be true to your Savior.

Let us unite our hearts in praying that beautiful prayer for confirmants that has come down to us from ages past:

"Almighty and merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Thou who through the Holy Spirit dost begin and perfect the good work in us; we thank Thee that in Baptism Thou hast granted these young servants of Thine the gift of regeneration; we thank Thee that through the enlightenment of Thy Word Thou hast enabled them to acknowledge Thy saving grace. Perfect, we beseech Thee, what Thou hast begun. Grant them an ever increasing knowledge of the salvation Thou hast prepared in Christ. They are weak; strengthen them with Thy might. They are to meet a dangerous world; guide them with Thy counsel. They are to experience manifold temptations: do Thou help them to resist and to overcome. In every hour of need and of sore trial, comfort them with Thy Holy Spirit. Help them to watch and pray, and to seek diligently in Word and Sacrament the nourishment of Thy grace, to the end that, in sanctification of the Spirit, together with Thy faithful people, they may before all the world, in word and deed, confess Thee with the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Amen.

Ninth Week: AN EXPANDING LIFE

February 26. The Normal Development

There are some people who hold that every young person must have his fling at the life of the world and sow his wild oats before he can settle down to a steady and useful life. Likewise the conception is all too common that Christianity is not suitable for youth; that it is to be reserved for a later period when the attractions of the life of the world take a lesser hold upon one.

All such thoughts come from the depths of hell. Untold mischief and eternal ruin have been wrought by such a philosophy.

The right development of youth is not through a series of moral lapses and escapades that leave a person marred for life. The youth should not be dropping downward, nor going backward, nor even standing still.

The normal experience should be a growth upward. The very law of youth is growth—physical growth, intellectual growth. And there is absolutely no reason why the law of uninterrupted growth should not apply to the spiritual life of the youth.

Here again, Jesus is our pattern. *"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"* (Luke 2:52). Oh, that our young people might catch a vision of the glory and beauty of the expanding Christian life.

"Lord, to Thee I now surrender
All I have and all I am;
Make my heart more true and tender,
Glorify in me Thy name.
Let obedience, let obedience
To Thy will be all my aim."

Dear God, we thank Thee for our Christian young people. Grant that they may be kept in constant fellowship with Thee and grow in all those qualities and activities which make for a full Christian life. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Ninth Week: AN EXPANDING LIFE

February 27. Growth in Wisdom

Young people often seem to think that with confirmation they have graduated from all Christian instruction. They put their books on the shelf and proceed promptly to forget a good deal of what they have learned. They seem to think that there is no further progress to make in Christian knowledge.

What a sad mistake! How sincerely to be pitied are young people who have no bigger idea of Christianity than that!

Such was not Paul's idea. He was tremendously concerned about the continued growth of Christians in wisdom. Thus we read: *"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding"* (Col. 1:9).

The wisest of men have studied Christian truth all their lives and yet have confessed that they stand but on the threshold of spiritual understanding.

Young friends, if you would possess more of the riches of spiritual wisdom, by all means attend regularly the services in the Lord's house, read your Bible and other Christian books prayerfully, join a Bible Class, take an active part in the programs of your young people's society. Give yourself a chance to grow.

O God, bless the confirmed young people. May they not slip back, but continue to advance steadily in knowledge of Thee and of Thy will. Open up to them, by Thy Holy Spirit, the great storehouses of spiritual truth and give them eagerness to equip themselves for increasing usefulness by constant growth in wisdom. May their ambition be to be intelligent, forward looking Christians. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Ninth Week: AN EXPANDING LIFE

February 28. Growth in Power

"We do not cease to pray and make request for you that you may be . . . strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory" (Col. 1:9-11).

Paul was greatly concerned about the growth of the Christians not only in wisdom but also in power. That should be an element in the young Christian's ideal too.

Many a young man is proud of his muscle and his athletic feats. Many a young woman glories in her intellectual prowess in college. Why should it not be thought worth while to grow in spiritual power?

Surely we need such power—the power to control our passions, our tongues, our eyes, our hands, our feet; the power to resist temptations, to keep our bodies a fit dwelling place for the Holy Spirit, and our minds clean for fellowship with God.

God is willing and eager to let the current of power flow into your life, but He cannot do it if you cut off the connection between yourself and Him. If then you would grow in power, keep close to God and draw freely on the Source of power. You will not be disappointed.

"Jesus, my strength, my hope,
On Thee I cast my care;
With humble confidence look up,
And know Thou hear'st my prayer.
Give me on Thee to wait,
Till I can all things do;
On Thee, almighty to create,
Almighty to renew."

O God, Thou seest the problems that young people have to meet today and the strength of character necessary to withstand temptations. Draw them closely into Thy fellowship and impart to them of Thy divine power. Help them to live victorious lives, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

February 29. Suggested reading, Ps. 90.

Ninth Week: AN EXPANDING LIFE

March 1. Growth in Faith

"And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

That was a very significant and necessary prayer for the apostles to pray.

Faith may be a vague thing to some people, but it holds a large place in the Christian life.

What really is faith? One element in faith is acceptance of a thing as true that cannot be demonstrated to the senses. But perhaps the largest element in faith is trust and confidence. In Hebrews it is defined in this way: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen."

Primarily the object of Christian faith is the person, Christ. When we have faith in Christ, we not merely believe in His existence and work, but we also yield ourselves with trust and confidence to Him as our Savior from sin and our Good Shepherd in life and in death.

This faith should increase. We should become more sure in our convictions so that we shall not be carried off our feet by every wind that blows. We should become more trustful in our dependence upon Jesus as our Redeemer and Guide. We should increase in assurance that God answers prayer and makes all things work together for good to them that love God.

"O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by many a foe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe.

"A faith that shines more bright and clear
When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear,
In darkness feels no doubt."

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Ninth Week: AN EXPANDING LIFE

March 2. Growth in Love

Scripture has much to say about love, but no passage is more beautiful than Paul's description in 1 Corinthians 13: *"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profited me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth . . . But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three: and the greatest of these is love."*

Who would not desire to grow in the possession and exercise of this wonderful quality? Who would not want to grow more and more like Jesus in this trait which so preeminently characterized Him?

Such growth is possible in the school of the Spirit.

O God of love, create in us more and more sincere devotion to Thee and to our fellowmen. Help especially our young people to grow in kindliness and sympathy in relation to the unfortunate people in the world. Save them from a selfishness that takes no thought for others. Enlarge their hearts with a deep compassion for men and women in need. Give them a passion for generous helpfulness. We pray in the name of our sacrificial Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Ninth Week: AN EXPANDING LIFE

March 3. Growth in Service

Love will express itself in service.

God has vast tasks to be performed in the world, and He uses Christians for their performance. Service is therefore well pleasing to God and is definitely enjoined by Him. Jesus says: *"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit"* (John 15:8).

It should be the aim of every Christian to grow in true usefulness, that the world may be a little better and happier because of his sojourn here.

Oh, what work of love there is to do in the world! In the home, helping mother or the younger children, in the congregation, in the Sunday school, in the choir, in the busy life of the world, helping the backward, feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, caring for the sick, visiting the aged, tending the orphans.

And when we look abroad, one thousand million heathen are calling for light and help. They have never heard of Jesus and His love. One generation after another goes into its grave without God and without hope. The Lord is calling for workers, for money, for prayers.

Every Christian should have a share in the Lord's work. And this share should grow larger with each advancing year. There should be steady growth in service.

> "I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,
> Through constant watching wise,
> To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
> To wipe the weeping eyes;
> A heart at leisure from itself
> To soothe and sympathize."

O Lord, wilt Thou touch the hearts of our young people with an appreciation of the world's needs. Help them to a more perfect consecration to Thy program of merciful ministries. Make them eager to work in Thy vineyard, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Ninth Week: AN EXPANDING LIFE

March 4. Growth in Vision

In bringing to a close this week's meditations on "An Expanding Life" we have yet to consider progress in a very important respect. We may call it growth in vision.

What does that mean?

It means growth in ability to look beyond the present and the commonplace. There should be, in the Christian's life, increasing ability to look at his life in relation to God's plan for it and for the world, so that he does not become lost and live a humdrum life in the performance of seemingly unimportant acts. No useful act is really unimportant, no matter how small it may be, but it takes on larger significance when viewed in relation to a larger whole. Washing dishes may seem a trivial task, but when viewed in relation to the whole task of making a happy home, it has a certain glory thrown about it.

Then, too, we should grow in vision in the sense of looking at the unfolding of God's plans and their ultimate consummation. Such growth in vision is a fruit of the Spirit. Witness the prophecy of Joel fulfilled on the day of Pentecost:

> "And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
> I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh:
> And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
> And your young men shall see visions,
> And your old men shall dream dreams." (Acts 2:17).

Help us, O Lord, increasingly to see meaning in our own lives and glory in Thy world plan. Help us to lift up our eyes and look out upon the fields white unto the harvest. Save us from smallness and narrowness. Lift us up out of the valleys unto the heights where we may have a mountain view of Thy kingdom. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tenth Week: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

March 5. A Real Privilege

In His love and wisdom God has made wonderful provision for our continued spiritual development. Perhaps the most important of all such agencies is the public worship in the Lord's house.

Some people do not seem to care to go to church at all. It is, however, really a precious privilege. Most of us have the opportunity in such abundance that we do not always rightly appreciate it. If we were to be deprived of the privilege, we would realize how much we had lost. Our home missionary pastors tell us that when they come into a new field, where no pastor has been for a time, and there conduct divine services, the people weep for joy at the privilege of again sharing in Christian worship.

The Psalmist of old gave beautiful expression to the sentiment which the thought of the Lord's house stirs in the hearts of God's children:

"How amiable are Thy tabernacles,
O Jehovah of hosts!
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah;
My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God. . . .
For a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand.
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."—(Ps. 84:1, 2, 10.)

"Built on the Rock the Church doth stand,
Even when steeples are falling;
Crumbled have spires in every land,
Bells still are chiming and calling;
Calling the young and old to rest,
But above all the soul distrest
Longing for rest everlasting."

Teach us, O God, to love Thy sanctuary. May we ever be happy to be in the Lord's house on the Lord's day. Make us joyful in the worship of our Savior. Amen.

Tenth Week: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

March 6. The Meaning of Public Worship

"This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven" (Gen. 28:17).

What is it that gives such value to public worship? Fundamentally it is that Christians there have a meeting with God. This is clearly set forth in the opening prayer: "O Lord, our Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, we are assembled in Thy presence to hear Thy holy word. We pray Thee so to open our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit, that through the preaching of Thy word we may be taught to repent of our sins, to believe on Jesus in life and in death, and to grow day by day in grace and holiness. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen."

The Christian comes with his burden of sin into the presence of God who, because of Christ's redemptive work, is ready to grant the penitent pardon and peace, life and salvation.

The pastor stands as a representative. At times he turns to the altar and on behalf of the congregation speaks to God. At other times he faces the congregation and as God's representative speaks to the people.

Confession and proclamation, prayer and worship, instruction and admonition, in word, act, and song, are thus mingled in this blessed meeting with God.

> "Open now thy gates of beauty,
> Zion, let me enter there,
> Where my soul in joyful duty,
> Waits for Him who answers prayer;
> Oh, how blessed is this place,
> Filled with solace, light, and grace."

Bless us, O Lord, as we come into Thy presence. Help us to leave behind us all the thoughts of the world, all the anxious cares, all the disturbing worries. Grant that we may join with all our hearts in the blessed worship of Thee. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tenth Week: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

March 7. A Fellowship of Christians

Not only is the service in church a meeting with God; it is also a coming together of fellow Christians. Christ gave a special promise in connection with such assembling of Christians when He said: *"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matt. 18:20).

As normal human beings we are social in our nature; we like to get together with other people. What is more natural than that Christians, who have so many things in common, should enjoy getting together?

And it is blessed for us to do so. We are thus reminded of our common faith in a common God. We can thus join with one another in our worship and our praise. By ourselves we are liable to become discouraged in our struggles with temptation and sin, but when we come together in Jesus' name we encourage one another. "In union there is strength."

By ourselves, too, our faith is liable to grow faint and our love cold, but when we come together we strengthen one another and warm one another to renewed fervor. We may learn a lesson from the coals of the fire, dying if scattered, but brightly glowing in a compact mass.

"We love the place, O God,
Wherein Thine honor dwelleth;
The joy of Thine abode
All earthly joy excelleth;
It is the house of prayer,
Wherein Thy servants meet;
And Thou, O Lord, art there
Thy chosen flock to greet."

Bless, O Lord, our fellowship in worship. May we be strengthened by the knowledge that we do not stand alone. May we all together help one another in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tenth Week: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

March 8. The Order of Service

Someone perhaps impatiently remarks: "There is so much form and ceremony in the church service that doesn't mean anything to me."

What shall we say of this attitude? Well, there must be some kind of an order of service so that pastor and people will know how to proceed through the period of worship. The Lord's servant Paul says: *"Let all things be done decently and in order"* (1 Cor. 14:40).

Now there could conceivably be a different order every Sunday, but people would soon tire of that. The question then comes, What kind of order of service shall we have? Some want a very simple form, others very decidedly prefer a fuller liturgy. The church has been working on this problem for upwards of two thousand years. The form of service we have today, therefore, is the result of centuries of trial and adaptation. Parts of it go clear back to the Apostolic age. It is at least a reasonable supposition that anything brand new that we might devise would not in all respects be an improvement on the old that has stood the test of so many years.

The form of service we have has been worked out to harmonize with the central idea in public worship, a meeting of Christians with God.

Help us, O Lord, to appreciate our indebtedness to the past and to see the real meaning of the service in Thy house. Help us to see in the form of service a vessel to be filled with the vital content of our spiritual worship. Grant that we may give to Thee our worship and our praise and receive from Thee Thy blessings of grace. Let Thy Spirit come into our hearts, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Tenth Week: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

March 9. Devoutness

"Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God" (Eccl. 5:1).

The blessings we shall derive from public worship in the house of God depend much upon the spirit in which we go. If we want to be blessed in our going, we must be devout.

When Sunday morning comes, let an offering of praise ascend from your heart to God because His day has again arrived. Let there also be a prayer for His blessing upon the day for you, for your pastor, and for other Christians.

Some people have the beautiful practice, before going to church, of looking up the appointed texts for the day and thus letting the Holy Spirit attune their hearts for the reception of the Lord's message.

On your way to church try to leave behind all thoughts of your daily cares and business, and when you have taken your place in the sanctuary, let the first moments be spent in silent prayer.

If you come in such a spirit of devoutness, you will be in the right attitude to join in the opening prayer, the confessions, and the hymns; to receive the proclamations of God's grace in Christ and to listen eagerly to the message of God through your pastor.

"Gracious Spirit, Dove divine!
Let Thy light within me shine;
All my guilty fears remove,
Fill me with Thy heavenly love."

Blessed Redeemer, prepare our hearts for communion with Thee. Bless us on our way to Thy house. Let the presence of God be strong all about us as we enter the sanctuary. Make us truly devout before Thee. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tenth Week: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

March 10. Hindrances

In spite of the fact that it is a real privilege to go to church and that the blessings associated with the practice are many, there are people who stay away from church more or less. As the guests in the parable bidden to the great supper, they say: *"I pray thee have me excused"* (Luke 14:18).

And the excuses they submit are legion. Sometimes one sleeps too late; sometimes the weather is too hot or too cold or too wet; sometimes one has a headache, that disappears, however, later in the day; sometimes one wants to read the Sunday newspaper; sometimes there is company; sometimes the pastor is not what he should be; sometimes there are too many hypocrites in the church; sometimes there is lack of a new hat; sometimes there is an automobile ride to take.

O friends, should we not be ashamed of ourselves to offer such excuses to God for staying away from His house? What is the real reason for our absence? It is lack of love to God and the things of His kingdom.

What is the cure? It is a thorough conviction of sin that reveals to us our absolute dependence upon the mercy of God. If we really saw ourselves as lost and condemned sinners, we would cry aloud for mercy. Then Christ as our Savior would become infinitely precious to us and going to church would be no hardship but, instead, a priceless privilege.

O God, give us a greater love for Thee and Thy fellowship. Show us our real need of Thee. Create in our hearts a hunger for Thy grace and Thy presence. When Sunday comes, may our desire be strong for spiritual exaltation in Thy presence. Direct our steps to Thy sanctuary. Save us from making unworthy excuses. Draw us by the power of Thy saving love in Christ. Amen.

Tenth Week: CHURCH ATTENDANCE

March 11. Regularity

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" (Hebr. 10:24-25).

The criticism is sometimes offered that people go to church purely from force of habit. Well, if people do no worse thing habitually, they are fortunate indeed.

To be sure, habit should not be the only reason for going to church. But it is God's will that we should be regular in our attendance. If we permit exceptions to occur now and then, it is so much easier to let insignificant hindrances interfere. Unless we are regular we have to face every Sunday the question of whether to go or not, with the chances of deciding not to go always pretty large.

But a more fundamental reason for regular attendance is that unless we have valid reasons for staying away we despise the Word of God. And no true Christian wishes to do that.

By regular attendance we get better instruction from the pulpit, we cheer the pastor, and encourage fellow Christians. Let us resolve once for all that the Lord's day shall find us in the Lord's house.

"Thanks we give and adoration
For Thy gospel's joyful sound.
May the fruits of Thy salvation
In our hearts and lives abound.
May Thy presence, may Thy presence
With us evermore be found."

We unite our hearts, dear Lord, in gratitude for the privilege of church attendance. Help us also to realize our responsibility for the honoring of Thy word. May we be glad and faithful in our worship. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Eleventh Week: THE WORD OF GOD

March 12. A Priceless Gift

This week we are to consider together the divine means of grace and of growth that God has given us in His Word.

The Bible is a precious gift to men. It is His message of love to us. We prize letters from our parents when we are away from home, but here we have letters from our heavenly Father.

The Bible is really from God. Again and again, over two thousand times, statements are made by the writers of the books of the Bible that they received their messages from God. The apostle Peter expresses it this way: *"No prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:21).

And Paul says: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"* (2 Tim. 3:16).

The attitude of Jesus to the Bible is especially significant. He constantly quoted from the Old Testament in an authoritative manner. Once He said: *"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished"* (Matt. 5:17-18).

And to men who were to write books of the New Testament he said: *"When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth"* (John 16:13).

We thank Thee, O God, for Thy Word. Help us always to deem it a precious gift. Give us a firm faith that Thou has spoken to us through the Scriptures and hast revealed Thy will for us. Make us, therefore, very eager to know Thy Word and help us to be guided by its divine teachings. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Eleventh Week: THE WORD OF GOD

March 13. The Value of the Bible

What is it that makes the Bible so valuable? Its worth may be expressed in many different ways. Paul summed it all up very pointedly in that well known passage in his letter to Timothy: *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

It is from the Bible that there have been derived the great doctrines of the church setting forth the unique way of salvation through Christ. By its statement of the eternal laws of God the Bible convinces men of sin, and by its proclamation of the good news of grace in Christ it invites sinners to accept the pardon of all transgressions and to enter into life. It sets forth ideals of life and service so high as ever to beckon men onward to higher levels. It reveals God's plan for the destiny of the individual and of the race. It holds before men the hope of eternal glory. It tells us whence we came, why we are here, and whither we are bound.

When Sir Walter Scott, the writer of many books, was about to die, he said to his friend: "Give me the book." "What book?" asked the friend. "There is only one book," replied Scott, "Give me the Bible."

> "Word of the ever-living God,
> Will of His glorious Son;
> Without Thee how could earth be trod,
> Or heaven itself be won?"

Help us, O God, always to reverence Thy Word. Give us grace to appreciate its precious worth. May we be always ready to defend it against the attacks of all enemies. May we find in it light and life, guidance and comfort, hope and peace. Help us to love it as the revelation of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Eleventh Week: THE WORD OF GOD

March 14. The Necessity of Its Use

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16).

If the Bible is so important a book, it would seem self-evident that it should be used. In spite of all its value it will do us no good unless we draw upon its resources. And yet in how many homes the Bible rests undisturbed upon the center-table for months and years.

In the writer's early childhood the parental home was insured in the E . . . Insurance Company and the agent had placed above the door a plate inscribed with the name "E . . ." We children had a sort of superstitious reverence for that plate, associating with it perhaps some magic potency that would protect the house from fire. Some people seem to regard the Bible as a charm to keep evil away or to win favor from God. Just to have it in the house seems to give them some sense of assurance. It is well to have reverence for the book, but to treat it like a talisman is plain superstition and heathenism.

The Bible is for us to use reverently, intelligently, constantly, prayerfully. The more we use it, the more its treasures are revealed.

"O may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light."

Grant, O Lord, increased desire to use Thy Word and to see more clearly the Savior it reveals. Forbid, O Lord, that the sacred volume should lie unopened in our homes. Wilt Thou so transform our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit that we may get a real hunger for Thy Bread of Life. Show us that we can not live without its spiritual sustenance. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Eleventh Week: THE WORD OF GOD

March 15. Methods in Using the Bible

How are we to use the Word of God?

We are to hear it preached in church and to study it in schools of religion. This is clear. But we are also to use it in our homes. In a devotional book like this and in other books based on the Bible we deal with the Word of God. It should also be the desire and practice of Christians to read the Bible itself; and not only read it, but study it. It is recorded of the Jews of Berea that *"these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). There is a fine example for emulation.

We say that Luther gave us the open Bible. That does not mean that it is open merely to pastors and preachers to be resorted to for sermon texts. The Bible lies ready at hand for study by every Christian.

An all-sided view of truth may be had by reading the Bible through from beginning to end. A fruitful and interesting method is to study the Bible topically by means of a concordance or Bible text book. But perhaps the most satisfactory way is to study the Bible by books, one at a time. Read a book through as a unit for a total impression, then more slowly in a more detailed study. Much new light comes in that way.

"Word of mercy, giving
Succor to the living;
Word of life supplying
Comfort to the dying!
O that we discerning
Its most holy learning,
Lord, may love and fear Thee,
Evermore be near Thee."

Lord, give us intelligence and wisdom in the use of Thy Word. Help us to a prayerful and thoughtful study of Thy precious revelation that we may learn its wondrous truth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Eleventh Week: THE WORD OF GOD

March 16. A Right Approach

The manner in which the Bible is studied is not as important as the spirit in which it is approached. The apostle James gives wise direction here: *"Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves"* (James 1:21-22).

No one should begin Bible reading without prayer—prayer for the enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth."

If we approach the Bible prayerfully we shall also approach it reverently and devoutly. We shall regard it for what it is, the very Word of God to men.

We should also read the Word expectantly, looking for messages that fit our particular circumstances and needs. God will speak to each of us through the Word if but our eyes are open to see and our hearts to receive.

But primarily we should read the Bible in a spirit of obedience to its messages. "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding your own selves." This is essential to the largest blessing in reading the Bible.

> "Lord grant us all aright to learn
> The wisdom it imparts;
> And to its heavenly teaching turn,
> With simple, childlike hearts."

May Thy Spirit guide us, O Lord, as we go to Thy word. May we approach its study reverently, humbly, devoutly, and prayerfully. And may we have in our hearts a sincere purpose to be governed by its teachings. Give us the spirit of obedience. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Eleventh Week: THE WORD OF GOD

March 17. Results of Use—Illumination

If we use the Bible aright, we shall get large returns. One of the most precious results will be illumination. This is what the psalmist had received who wrote:

> *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,*
> *And a light unto my path"* (Ps. 119:105).

The Bible student will get light upon God, His nature, His redemptive plan, His purposes for the world. He will learn to know Jesus better, for He is the central theme of Scripture. It is He who gives meaning to the Old and New Testaments alike.

The student of Scripture will come to know the way of the Holy Spirit in bringing Christ to men and men to Christ. He will come to understand human nature better. The Bible is an invaluable source book in psychology.

Through the study of God's Word a man will be led to see the hopelessness of his condition as a sinner and his supreme need of a Savior, and if he permits himself to be led aright, he will come to believe in Jesus Christ as his Redeemer. In his life as a Christian light will come to him from the Bible for the problems that arise daily, and when he passes through the valley of the shadow, the beacon light of God's Word will lead him to the gates of heaven.

> "O Word of God incarnate,
> O Wisdom from on high,
> O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
> O Light of our dark sky;
> We praise Thee for the radiance
> That from the hallowed page,
> A lamp unto our footsteps,
> Shines on from age to age."

We cannot sufficiently thank Thee, O God, for Thy priceless word. May our gratitude lead us to draw constantly on its treasures and thus to honor Thee who gave us the Gift. Bless it for us in Jesus' name. Amen.

Eleventh Week: THE WORD OF GOD

March 18. Results of Use—Power

"The Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebr. 4:12).

The Word of God is throbbing with life and power, and the Christian who knows his Bible is a man of dynamic force. He is powerful in rebuking the unrighteous, persuading sinners, and comforting the penitent. He is powerful in resisting temptation and in overcoming doubt. He is not swayed hither and thither by every wind that blows; he stands firmly rooted in the truth; he is walking with God and derives strength from that fellowship.

Such a Christian Bible student is powerful in active Christian service, for he not only knows God's instructions for the work, but also the reassuring promises that God has given His co-laborers in the Kingdom.

Whether in the pulpit or in the pew, the man of God who knows his Bible is one of the bulwarks of the state and of the church.

"Thy word is like a flaming sword,
A wedge that cleaveth stone;
Keen as a fire, so burns Thy word,
And pierceth flesh and bone.
Let it go forth o'er all the earth,
To cleanse our hearts within,
To show Thy power in Satan's hour
And break the might of sin."

O God, Thou seest the need in the world of men and women of spiritual power. Grant that many may draw freely upon the resources in Thy Word and thus be equipped for dynamic usefulness. Grant our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twelfth Week: THE LORD'S SUPPER

March 19. A New Privilege

With confirmation the young person enters into a new privilege—participation in the Lord's Supper.

The Lutheran Church believes that a person should not be admitted to the Lord's Supper before he is fairly intelligent about spiritual things. He should have some conception of the meaning of Law and Gospel, sin and grace, repentance and faith, in order that he may test himself and know what he is doing when he partakes of the Sacrament. The preparation required for confirmation is regarded as being adequate for this purpose.

It is a rare privilege into which the confirmed person now enters. He is allowed a share in this blessed communion with the Lord, the most intimate fellowship with his Savior which it is possible for a soul on earth to enjoy. *"It is the true Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given unto us Christians to eat and to drink, as it was instituted by Christ Himself."*

Jesus comes to hold communion with us, and we enter into the very essence of His being. We become one with Him; He in us and we in Him, in harmony with the spirit of the beautiful words: *"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

"Abide with us in blessing,
Lord of the earth and sky,
Rich grace and strength possessing,
Do Thou our need supply!"

Dear Jesus, show us more and more how precious it is to be with Thee. Create in our hearts a deep yearning for the closest possible fellowship with Thee. We pray in Thy own blessed name. Amen.

Twelfth Week: THE LORD'S SUPPER

March 20. The Institution of the Sacrament

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is My Body, which is given for you; this do in remembrance of Me.

"After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; this cup is the New Testament in My Blood, which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins; this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me" (From the Communion Ritual, based on Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25).

Note the circumstances. It was in the night of Christ's betrayal. He was with His disciples in that upper room for a farewell gathering. He knew what was in store for Him in the cruel suffering and death which He was about to endure. But He was not thinking of Himself. His great love went out to His disciples. He looked into the future; yes, even to our day, and saw the needs of His followers. He wanted to do something helpful for us all. He wanted to leave as His last will and testament a precious gift. So He gave us this Sacrament to enjoy to the end of time.

Let us remember, too, that this Sacrament is no human invention. It is no invention of priests by which to awe men or to exercise a spell over them. It is from the Lord Himself.

O wondrous Savior, help us to contemplate Thy surpassing love and thoughtfulness for us even in the presence of Thine own agony, and may there come from our hearts a responding love to Thee. Help us to make grateful use of Thy Sacrament. We pray in Thy name. Amen.

Twelfth Week: THE LORD'S SUPPER

March 21. The Purpose of the Sacrament

What benefits are derived from the Lord's Supper? Three or four things seem clear.

The first and chief benefit is pointed out in these words:

"Take eat; this is my Body, which is given for you." "Drink ye all of it; this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins."

"Through these words the remission of sins, life and salvation are given unto us in the Sacrament; for where there is remission of sins, there is also life and salvation."

How can the bodily eating and drinking produce such great benefits?

"The eating and drinking, indeed, do not produce them, but the words: 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins'; for besides the bodily eating and drinking, these words are the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he who believes them, has what they say and declare, namely, the remission of sins."

Secondly, the Sacrament is for the purpose of remembrance. *"This do in remembrance of Me."* Every time the Lord's supper is received Christ's atoning death is commemorated. Had it not been for this Sacrament, it is doubtful if the sacrificial death of Christ would have been so clearly retained in the consciousness of the church.

In the third place, the Sacrament is given for our strengthening. It is a means of grace and preservation. Christian experience bears witness that regular and prayerful participation in the Lord's supper is a very real source of spiritual power. The strength of Christ becomes ours through the communion.

A fourth purpose may be pointed to in the intimate fellowship among Christians which joint participation in the Sacrament serves to cultivate.

For all this we thank Thee, Jesus, and praise Thee for Thy wisdom and Thy tender love. Amen.

Twelfth Week: THE LORD'S SUPPER

March 22. A Mystery

"But," you say, "I cannot understand how Christ can give us His body and blood in the Sacrament." No, we cannot fully understand it; we bare our heads in the presence of a great mystery.

But there are many other things which go to make up our experiences that we cannot understand. No scientist can explain the Northern Lights, but we enjoy their beauty. No one can tell us what electricity is, yet we make use of it in countless ways. No one can fathom love, or hate, or patriotism, or self-sacrifice, yet we know that all these are powerful motives in human conduct. Why then should we raise such difficulties in regard to the Lord's Supper simply because our reason cannot grasp it fully? To contend that we cannot accept anything that we cannot understand is to be guilty of the extreme foolishness of limiting the mighty universe to the scope of our little minds and rob ourselves of many of the choicest experiences in life.

We know that Christ Himself instituted the Sacrament of His Supper, that He said in plain language: "Take, eat; this is my body," "Drink ye all of it, for this is my blood of the new covenant," and "This do in remembrance of me." This is enough for the Christian. In trustful and obedient faith he accepts the divine gift and makes use of it to the enrichment of his soul.

Lord, save us from the prejudices of our benighted reason. Inspire us with an abiding faith in the unseen. Help us to believe that in Thy divine wisdom and love Thou didst ordain in this Sacrament a means for richly blessing our lives, even if we cannot fully fathom it all. Putting aside our difficulties may we accept Thy gracious gift. We pray in Thy own name. Amen.

Twelfth Week: THE LORD'S SUPPER

March 23. Preparation for the Sacrament

Who, then, receives the Sacrament worthily?

"Fasting and bodily preparation are indeed a good outward discipline, but he is truly worthy and well prepared who believes these words:

"'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.'

"But he who does not believe these words or who doubts them, is unworthy and unprepared; for the words, 'For you,' require truly believing hearts."

Pray for such faith. In your Bible, in your catechism, in your hymn book, or in any other book you may have about the Sacrament, read about its significance and right use. Meditate upon some of the great penitential psalms and hymns.

Further, in the words of St. Paul: *"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup"* (1 Cor. 11:28). On what points are you to test yourself? To see how perfect and holy you are? No, if you do, you will find so much of sin and be so discouraged that you will never deem yourself worthy to come to the Lord's Table. This is what you want to ask yourself: "Am I sorry for my sins? Do I want forgiveness? Do I believe that forgiveness is to be had through Christ?" If you can answer those questions with a "Yes," you are well fitted to come to the blessed Sacrament. You may not feel the degree of sorrow, the desire for grace, or the strength of faith that you think you ought to feel. Well, talk with Jesus about that, but do not let such feelings keep you away from the very means of grace intended for the strengthening of your spiritual life.

"When I approach Thine altar, Lord,
May I this comfort cherish,
That on the cross Thy blood was poured
For me, lest I should perish.
Thou didst for me God's law fulfill,
That holy joy my heart might thrill
When on Thy love I'm feasting."

Amen.

Twelfth Week: THE LORD'S SUPPER

March 24. Confession and Absolution

The church has wisely arranged a confessional service, usually preceding the Sacrament. In this service the participants join with the pastor in a public confession of sins, and the pastor absolves them from their sin with these words: "By the authority of God, and of my holy office, I declare unto thee the gracious forgiveness of all thy sins; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

It is of course perfectly clear that none but the penitent and believing souls can take to themselves the comfort of these gracious words. The declaration of the forgiveness of sins is no magic talisman that apart from our faith works a change in our hearts or in our relationship to God. True penitence and true faith are the prerequisites for this blessing of God's grace.

If we are sincere in our confession, we may take to ourselves the full comfort of the words of absolution.

Let us offer today one of the great penitential prayers of the church:

O Lord, our God: We come before Thee as poor, sinful beings, and are without excuse in that we have sinned against Thee by thought, word, and deed. But we believe in Thine only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who hath suffered death for our salvation; and for His sake we pray Thee: Forgive us all our sins! Grant us Thy Holy Spirit, to the end that we may believe Thy pardoning Word, and that, according to the purpose and desire of our hearts, we may flee all sin, and may suffer Thy holy and blessed will to rule in all things. Lord, have mercy upon us. Amen.

Twelfth Week: THE LORD'S SUPPER

March 25. Gratitude for the Sacrament

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Every sincere communicant will return thanks to God for the gifts of the Lord's supper. We give thanks for bodily food. Surely then we should give thanks for this spiritual nourishment. Let the evening of communion day be a quiet hour of heartfelt gratitude for the blessings of the Sacrament.

And let the gratitude find expression in more than words. Let there be a more steady purpose to live a Christ-like life, a more decided shunning of sin, and a more earnest seeking after the graces that adorn Christian character. Let there be a more consecrated spirit of service to God and of helpfulness to fellowmen. Let love grow strong within the soul.

One way of showing gratitude for the Sacrament is to come often to the Lord's Table. There are many things that tend to keep one away, among them one's own feeling of unworthiness. But, friend, if you want the forgiveness of sins and are sincerely desirous of living the Christian life, by all means come to the Holy Supper. Christ says, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

By the very confession to the world which you make in going to the Lord's Supper, you will be helped to keep in the path of life. You have taken a stand, and the world will respect you. You show grateful honor to Christ by coming often to the Lord's Table.

We thank Thee, Lord God Almighty, that Thou hast vouchsafed to refresh us with these Thy salutary gifts; and we beseech Thee, of Thy mercy, to strengthen us through the same in faith toward Thee, and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

Thirteenth Week: PRAYER

March 26. The Place of Prayer

We have noted some of the blessings of baptism for the Christian. We have also been reminded how abundantly the good Lord has provided food for our souls in His Word and in the Holy Supper. We are now to consider that very important element in the Christian life which we call prayer.

That it is God's thought that prayer should have a large part in the Christian's life is abundantly clear from the many commands and encouragements to prayer found in the Scriptures. Here are some of them: *"Pray without ceasing"* (1 Thes. 5:17). *"With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit"* (Eph. 6:18). Jesus *"spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray, and not to faint"* (Luke 18:1). And Paul says: *"I desire therefore that the men pray in every place"* (1 Tim. 2:8).

There are at least fifty special prayers recorded in the Old Testament and more than forty in the New. All the great men of Bible and Church history have been strong in prayer. Of Jesus it is recorded that He sometimes spent all night in prayer.

These considerations all lead to the same conclusion that according to the loving thoughts of God for us we should make ample provision for prayer in our lives.

Dear God, we thank Thee that we may come to Thee in prayer. Grant us grace to make grateful use of this means of fellowship with Thee; to listen to Thee and to speak with Thee. May we not become so busy that we have not time to be quiet in Thy presence. Grant that we may have a sense both of need and desire to be much with Thee in prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirteenth Week: PRAYER

March 27. The Meaning of Prayer

"Behold he prayeth" (Acts 9:11).

Prayer has been variously defined as "Communion with God," "The breath of the soul," and "Man and God joining hands for the accomplishment of some great task."

Sometimes prayer is of the nature of praise and thanksgiving; sometimes it is just being still before God and permitting Him to speak to us through His Word; sometimes it becomes active in petitioning God for spiritual or temporal blessings.

Perhaps no more significant interpretation of the meaning of prayer has ever been offered than these beautiful words by the hymn writer Montgomery:

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of the eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death:
He enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice
Returning from his ways,
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, 'Behold, he prays!' "

The last stanza is a prayer. Let us make it our own.

"O Thou, by whom we come to God,
The life, the truth, the way!
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod;
Lord, teach us how to pray."

Amen.

Thirteenth Week: PRAYER

March 28: Encouragements to Prayer

The Bible constantly encourages to prayer and holds out some wondrous promises in connection therewith. Once Jesus spoke as follows:

"Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say to him Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him; and he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee? I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. And of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:5-13).

The apostle Paul offers this cheering encouragement: *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Rom. 10:13).

James brings us this assurance: *"If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him"* (Jas. 1:5).

Our heavenly Father, we thank Thee for Thy rich promises of blessings to be received in answer to prayer. Grant us grace to ask and expect great things from Thee. Help us to understand that the incense of prayer is pleasing to Thee. Give us the true spirit of prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirteenth Week: PRAYER

March 29. The Objects of Prayer

The range of things for which we may pray is very wide according to Jesus' own words: *"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son"* (John 14:13).

According to this promise we may pray for anything if we do it in Christ's name. We may pray for temporal things, for physical health, for the necessities of life. We may pray for help and guidance in our work on the farm, in the shop, in the office, in the store, in the kitchen, in the schoolroom, or wherever it may be. We may pray God to be with us in our enjoyments and our play. God wants His children to be happy. He will withhold no truly good thing from us.

Since the most important interests in life for us are the spiritual, it follows, of course, that they should be the supreme objects of our praying.

"What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear—
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!

"Are we weak and heavy-laden,
Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge!—
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?—
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield thee
Thou wilt find a solace there."

Our gracious Father in heaven, teach us by a trusting faith to take everything to Thee in prayer. Help us to believe that nothing is too insignificant to speak to Thee about. Give us a child-like spirit in prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirteenth Week: PRAYER

March 30. Prayer in the Name of Jesus

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in my name. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full" (John 16:23-24).

What does it mean to pray in the name of Jesus? It means, to begin with, that we base our prayer on Christ and His merits. Sinful as we are, we are not fit to approach the holy God in our own right. But since Christ has taken our sins upon Himself and has died for us, we may approach the Father through Him. We come then pleading not our own merits but Christ's. We come in His name. He is our friend at court.

To pray in Jesus' name implies further that we desire all our petitions to be in harmony with His nature and will. There must be a community of interest with Him. Light on the nature of such union may be derived, as Rev. Murray so beautifully points out, from a contemplation of the relationship between a merchant and his chief clerk, a father and his son, a bridegroom and his bride. "The name represents the person; to ask in the Name is to ask in full union of interest and life and love with Himself, as one who lives in and for Him. Let the Name of Jesus only have undivided supremacy in my heart and life, my faith will grow to the assurance that what I ask in that Name cannot be refused. The name and the power of asking go together; when the name of Jesus has become the power that rules my life, its power in prayer with God will be seen too."

Dear Jesus, teach us the true meaning of prayer in Thy name. Help us that our spirits may be so completely attuned to Thy Spirit that our wills shall be in perfect harmony with Thy will. We pray this in Thy name. Amen.

March 31. Answers to Prayer

God hears all the prayers of all His children. That does not mean, however, that He grants all our petitions in just the way we think we would like to have them answered.

The apostle Paul once urgently prayed for the removal of a thorn in his flesh. We do not know for sure what evil it was that Paul spoke of in this way, but it was plainly something that was very burdensome to him. God did not grant that petition, but He answered Paul's prayer by the assurance: *"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Cor. 12:9).

That wasn't exactly what Paul had expected, but he speaks later of God's dealing with him in this matter as a source of great good to himself.

Many of our prayers may be answered in strange fashion. It would be a dire calamity for us if certain of our prayers were granted in the way we ask them. God is kind enough to save us from the foolishness of our own ignorance and wilfulness.

But of this let us be definitely assured that God hears all the prayers of His believing children, and that all prayers offered in the name of Jesus—and therefore according to the will of God—will be answered in the ways that are best for us and for the kingdom of God. "'In my name' is its own safeguard."

Dear Lord, Thy promises are wonderful. Teach us in the school of Thy Spirit that when we pray, we may place all confidence in Thy power, Thy wisdom, and Thy love. Grant us such fulfilment of our petitions as shall be good for us and shall glorify Thy holy name. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirteenth Week: PRAYER

April 1. Power in Prayer

There is clearly a vast difference among Christians in their efficacy and power in prayer. What makes the difference? Let us permit some Scripture passages to answer this question. Jesus said to His disciples: *"Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you"* (John 15:16). The apostle John says: *"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight"* (1 John 3:21-22).

Here we are plainly told that power in prayer is dependent on fruit-bearing and obedience. In other words, to have power in prayer we must live in harmony with God's will and purposes. Our faith must show itself in acts of loving service and in scrupulous observance of God's commandments. No one can deliberately go against God's directions for his life and service and expect to possess any efficacy in prayer. His words fall to the earth dead; they cannot rise to heaven.

Notice that it is the righteous man of whom James says that his effectual fervent prayer availeth much.

Our blessed Lord and Master, grant us grace to abstain from iniquity, to exercise ourselves in loving service, and to be so in harmony with Thy holy will that our prayers shall not be hindered. Give us a steadfast purpose to exercise ourselves in perfect obedience in even the smallest things so that nothing may come between us and Thee. Teach us that the supreme purpose of our lives is to glorify Thee. And may we pray in that spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fourteenth Week: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

April 2. Jesus' Habits in Prayer

"And it came to pass in these days, that he went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12).

Instinctively we bare our heads in the presence of this scene—the Son of God in communion with His Father.

There is something incomprehensible about the prayer-life of Jesus. He was Himself true God. He revealed divine power in stilling the storms, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, driving out evil spirits, delivering from death; and yet He needed to pray—and not only once and in one particular situation, but repeatedly and under a variety of circumstances. In times of joy and in times of sorrow, alone and in the presence of a multitude, for Himself and for others He prayed. Especially did He seem to have a need of praying when He stood face to face with great experiences, such as His baptism, His transfiguration, His agony in Gethsemane, and His dying upon the cross; when He faced the necessity of grave decisions, as the choosing of the twelve disciples; when He was called upon to exercise His divine power, as in the raising of Lazarus.

Truly we cannot understand the need of the Divine One for prayer, but we can derive this lesson that, if He needed constantly to pray, much more do we need to make large use of this privilege of approach to the throne of grace.

Dear Jesus, we thank Thee for Thy example in prayer. We thank Thee for Thy beautiful prayer fellowship with Thy Father. Teach us to learn from Thee. Give us confidence and boldness in the presence of our heavenly Father. Give us courage to ask and grace to receive. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Fourteenth Week: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

April 3. The Apostles in Prayer

The disciples had seen and heard Jesus pray, and they seem to have sensed something of the significance which prayer had for Him. They dimly understood that there was some relationship between His life of prayer in the presence of God and His life of service in the presence of men. Therefore they wanted to learn how to pray too.

"And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke 11:1). So Jesus gave them a lesson in praying.

That prayer came to hold a large place in the life of the apostles is evident from the many references in the Book of Acts and in the Epistles. It is recorded that between the Ascension and Pentecost *"they all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer"* (Acts 1:14).

When they were to choose a man to take the place left vacant by Judas, they prayed for divine guidance.

They not only observed regular hours of prayer, but when facing particular situations, they had special sessions of prayer.

Paul's prayer spirit is everywhere in evidence. To his beloved Philippians he writes: *"I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel"* (Phil. 1:3-5).

It is not accidental that the first great propagators of the Christian religion were men strong in prayer. Prayer and missions always go together.

Lord Jesus, give us the spirit of prayer and of conquest. Help us through the means of intercession to draw on Thy boundless resources. Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Fourteenth Week: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

April 4. Habit in Prayer

Many people are desperately afraid of habit in spiritual things. And it must be confessed that a practice engaged in habitually tends to become formal and lifeless. Witness the thoughtless manner in which we often say the Lord's Prayer.

But habit is a good thing in spiritual matters as well as in the other departments of our life. Jesus set us an example in this respect, too. The evangelist records: *"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and he entered, as his custom was, into the synogogue on the sabbath day"* (Luke 4:16).

The law of habit is one of God's ordinances incorporated into our very natures. "Habit is the executive of ideas." It helps us enormously in the daily routine of our lives. It carries us over many hard places where otherwise we might fail.

That habit in spiritual things is pleasing to God is evident from the fact that definite and regular times for prayer were enjoined in the Old Testament dispensation.

In the New Testament times we have no such definitely appointed seasons of prayer, but reflection and experience abundantly demonstrate that our prayer life is greatly helped by regularity. In addition to grace at meals let there be at least one definite period each day set aside for devotion and prayer.

Help us, Lord Jesus, to regularity in prayer. Make us strong in resisting temptations to neglect prayer. When indifference would settle upon us, wilt Thou arouse us to a realization of our danger. When our souls seem cold within us, wilt Thou warm us up by Thy coming to us through Thy word. Attune our spirits to Thy fellowship, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Fourteenth Week: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

April 5. Private Prayer

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee" (Matt. 6:6).

Alone with the Father—that is the thought about prayer which Jesus brings us in these words. Blessed privilege! Shutting out the world with its noise and tumult, its struggle and strife; shutting one's self in from the presence of fellowmen, even the members of one's own family, to be with God alone—that is needful for the soul.

"In the secret of His presence," you may open your very heart to Him, show Him the temptations that beset you, the struggles you are passing through, the longings of your soul, the aspirations of your spirit, and know that your loving Savior sees and understands and forgives and strengthens.

Somehow in the routine of each day you must find place and opportunity for such a secret meeting with God. Best of all if you can literally be in your own room with the door shut. But the secret meeting with God may be had many times a day while in the midst of your busy work. Even in a throng you can be alone with God.

"The morning is the gate of day,
But ere you enter there
See that you set to guard it well,
The sentinel of prayer.

When you have reached the end of day
Where night and sleep await,
Set there the sentinel again
To bar the evening's gate.

So shall no fear disturb your day,
No danger and no care;
For only peace and pardon pass
The watchful gate of prayer."

O bless for me, Dear Lord, my prayer life alone with Thee. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Fourteenth Week: THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

April 6. Public Prayer

Jesus strongly urged secret prayer and condemned the attitude of the Pharisees, who offered long prayers on the street corners in order to be seen of men. This has led many to believe that Jesus condemned prayer in public; but a careful study of His words and the situation that brought them forth shows that He did not condemn the public character of the prayers, but the improper motive that actuated the Pharisees, namely to receive the praise of men.

Jesus Himself on several occasions prayed publicly. John 17, perhaps the most wonderful chapter in the Bible, is the record of Jesus' high priestly prayer, which He offered publicly in the presence of His disciples.

In the Old Testament times public prayer was practiced, and the same was true of the early Christian church.

There are blessings to be derived from public prayer. Many people, who cannot find expression for the longings of their hearts, experience that the words of someone else fit their case. Hearts that are spiritually cold are warmed by the fervent prayers of other fellow Christians.

Public prayer, too, is a confession. At the grave of Lazarus *"Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they might believe that thou didst send me"* (John 11:41-42).

Dear Father in heaven, we thank Thee that we may pray to Thee in public as well as in private. Give us grace in all our praying to be sincere and honest as before Thy face. Give us power and courage in prayer, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

April 7. United Prayer

On one occasion Jesus gave this wonderful encouragement to united prayer: *"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matt. 18:19-20).

Fellowship seems to hold a large place in God's arrangements for His children—fellowship in worship, fellowship in work, fellowship in joy, fellowship in sorrow, and fellowship also in prayer. How many Christians have experienced the blessedness of union in prayer! Whether it be a regular weekly prayer service or it be some great emergency that brings Christians together in prayer, the Spirit of God seems to weld the hearts into union in sharing love. And this kind of union, according to Jesus' own words, is effective in producing results. What Christians under such circumstances ask "shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven."

Surely then we should be eager to engage in the fellowship of prayer and claim God's rich promises. When we see all about us the unhappiness of human hearts, the hunger for something to satisfy the soul, should we not in united fervency besiege the throne of our Lord and Savior for the outpouring of His spiritual blessings upon men? God encourages us thus to pray.

Dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, teach us to understand more and more the meaning of our union with Thee and our fellowship, one with another. Give us the desire to approach Thee with united hearts that all our lives may be blessed by the power of Thy love released through united prayer. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

April 8. Intercessory Prayer

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings. be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1).

In this manner the apostle Paul enjoins intercessory prayer. He reinforces his request for prayer for all men by the statement that "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." The salvation and upbuilding of souls is truly the fundamental motive for intercessory prayer. If the burden of souls rests upon our hearts as heavily as it should, we cannot but be busy with intercession.

There are special classes of people that should prompt us to intercede for them at the throne of grace. Parents should pray for their children; more mature Christians should pray for the young people passing through the searching trials of temptation; church members should pray for their pastors, teachers, and officers; as Christian citizens we should pray for men and women in public office; and the home church people should especially remember their representatives whom they have sent into the front line service of foreign missions.

Intercessory prayer saves us from selfishness, widens our interests in the Kingdom, and calls down the blessings of God upon our fellowmen.

God, our Father in heaven, fill our hearts with deep appreciation of the problems and needs of other men and let our growing understanding make us zealously earnest in intercessory prayer. Help us to expand in our sympathies so as to embrace in our petitions an increasing number of precious human beings who are in need of Thy grace and bounty. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifteenth Week: THE PERFECT PRAYER

April 9. A Petition Granted

"And it came to pass, as Jesus was praying in a certain place that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

Our wonderful Savior gave a wonderful answer to that petition by teaching His disciples "The Perfect Prayer."

"Our Father, Who Art in Heaven"

WHAT A BEAUTIFUL NAME FOR GOD!

"God thereby tenderly encourages us to believe that He is truly our Father, and that we are truly His children, so that we may boldly and confidently come to Him in prayer, even as beloved children come to their dear father."

Surpassing all our powers of comprehension is the grace of God by which we may call Him Father. Disobedient, stubborn, sinful we are by nature; and yet God can make us over into His loving children and give us the privilege of coming to Him in prayer.

"Hallowed be Thy Name"

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"God's Name is indeed holy in itself; but we pray in this petition that it may be hallowed also among us."

HOW IS THIS DONE?

"When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we, as God's children, lead holy lives, in accordance with it. This grant us, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives otherwise than as God's Word teaches, profanes the Name of God among us. From this preserve us, heavenly Father!"

"All hallowed be Thy name, O Lord!
O let us firmly keep Thy word,
And lead, according to Thy name,
A holy life, untouched by blame;
Let no false teachings do us hurt—
All poor, deluded souls convert."

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifteenth Week: THE PERFECT PRAYER

April 10. The Kingdom

As the second petition in "The Perfect Prayer" Jesus taught His disciples to pray:

"Thy Kingdom Come"

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"The kingdom of God comes indeed of itself, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us."

HOW IS THIS DONE?

"When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word, and live a godly life here on earth, and in heaven for ever."

There are two kingdoms striving for mastery in the world —the kingdom of Satan against the kingdom of God. We pray here that we may be enlisted on the right side. To be so, the kingdom of God must be within us. The principles of righteousness, justice, and love must be given place in our hearts if our influence is to count for God.

In the spiritual realm at least it is impossible to belong to two kingdoms. It is profoundly true that "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." If we are to be able to pray this prayer sincerely, we must enthrone God as supreme ruler in our hearts. Then we may be effective in prayer for the coming of the Kingdom in the lives of others.

"Thy kingdom come! Thine let it be
In time and through eternity!
O let Thy Holy Spirit dwell
With us, to rule and guide us well;
From Satan's mighty power and rage
Preserve Thy Church from age to age."

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifteenth Week: THE PERFECT PRAYER

April 11. God's Will

To the prayers for the hallowing of God's name and for the coming of His kingdom is added a petition for the doing of God's will.

"Thy Will be Done on Earth, as it is in Heaven"

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may also be done among us."

HOW IS THIS DONE?

"When God destroys and brings to naught every evil counsel and purpose of the devil, the world, and our own flesh, which would hinder us from hallowing His Name, and prevent the coming of His kingdom; and when He strengthens us and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith, even unto our end. This is His good and gracious will."

Our own will would often dominate us. We pray here that we may subordinate our wills to God's, and that His will may triumph over all His enemies that would frustrate His purposes. We pray that we may be kept in league with Him.

The will of God has to do not only with great enterprises and with outstanding decisions. It covers the whole range of our daily duties and the countless, seemingly trivial choices that we have to make constantly. The truly consecrated person will strive to do God's will in all things, great or small.

"Thy will be done on earth, O Lord,
As where in heaven Thou art adored!
Patience in time of grief bestow,
Obedience true in weal and woe;
Our sinful flesh and blood control
That thwart Thy will within the soul."

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifteenth Week: THE PERFECT PRAYER

April 12. Daily Bread

In the very center of the Lord's Prayer we find the petition:

"Give us This Day our Daily Bread"

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"God indeed gives daily bread to all men, even to the wicked, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that He would lead us to acknowledge our daily bread as His gift, and to receive it with thanksgiving."

WHAT IS MEANT BY DAILY BREAD?

"Everything that is required to satisfy our bodily needs; such as food and raiment, house and home, fields and flocks, money and goods; pious parents, children and servants; godly and faithful rulers, good government; seasonable weather, peace and health; order and honor; true friends, good neighbors, and the like."

God is not unmindful of our temporal needs. Remember that it was Jesus who included in His pattern prayer the petition for daily bread. As God's children we have the privilege of asking for anything and everything that would minister to our welfare, our efficiency, our happiness both individually and socially.

Jesus knows what it means to be hungry, thirsty, weary, homeless, friendless. He knows what a large place in our lives these earthly matters hold, and He wants to assure His followers that the possession and enjoyment of temporal good things is in entire harmony with His conception of the walk with God.

"Give us this day our daily bread,
Let us be duly clothed and fed,
And keep Thou from our homes afar
Famine and pestilence and war,
That we may live in godly peace,
Unvexed by cares and avarice."

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifteenth Week: THE PERFECT PRAYER

April 13. Forgiveness.

Having prayed for the needs of the body we come now, by the guidance of Jesus in our prayer thoughts, to our deepest spiritual need.

"And Forgive us our Trespasses, as we Forgive Those Who Trespass Against us"

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We pray in this petition that our heavenly Father would not regard our sins nor because of them deny our prayers; for we neither merit, nor deserve those things for which we pray; but that He would grant us all things through grace, even though we sin daily, and deserve nothing but punishment. And certainly we, on our part, will heartily forgive, and gladly do good to those who may sin against us."

This is the petition we need to offer most of all. Without the privilege of believing and receiving the forgiveness of our sins we could not approach God at all. But pleading the merits of a Redeemer Christ we may come with full confidence that our sins shall be taken away.

And let us not forget the condition we add—to forgive those who injure us, as God forgives us.

The application of this condition constitutes a very real test of the Christian life. The nourishing of a grudge or the retention of an unforgiving attitude is evidence in itself of the absence of the truly Christian spirit. This petition drives us to self-examination.

"Forgive our sins, that they no more
May grieve and haunt us as before,
As we forgive their trespasses
Who unto us have done amiss;
Thus let us dwell in charity,
And serve each other willingly."

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifteenth Week: THE PERFECT PRAYER

April 14. Temptation.

To the prayer for forgiveness Jesus links the petition:

"And Lead us not Into Temptation"

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"God indeed tempts no one to sin; but we pray in this petition that God would so guard and preserve us, that the devil, the world, and our own flesh, may not deceive us, nor lead us into error and unbelief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; but that, when so tempted, we may finally prevail and gain the victory."

Temptations constitute some of the chief problems of the Christian life. Testings and trials beset us on every hand. Enemies within and without would destroy the soul.

Many a young person experiencing the mighty pull of appetites, passions, hatreds, and ambitions has found himself in the midst of a death grapple between his better impulses and the forces that would drag him down. Many a soul has trembled on the brink of the abyss.

At such a time man needs more than human strength. He needs to link his weak power with the conquering strength of God. If this is to be possible, there must be close fellowship. Man must live so intimately with God that when the testing comes, he may draw on the divine resources. Thus, and thus only, will he be able to triumph over temptation and gain the victory.

"Into temptation lead us not,
And when the foe doth war and plot
Against our souls on every hand,
Then armed with faith, O may we stand
Against him as a valiant host
Through comfort of the Holy Ghost."

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifteenth Week: THE PERFECT PRAYER

April 15. Deliverance

As the last petition we appropriately pray:

"But Deliver us From Evil"

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We pray in this petition, as in a summary, that our heavenly Father would deliver us from all manner of evil, whether it affect the body or soul, property or reputation, and at last, when the hour of death shall come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to Himself in heaven."

Whatever there is of evil that affects our body or soul, in life or in death,—we pray here to be delivered from it all, and for that final release from all our foes which comes to the believer when God in mercy calls him home to Himself.

"For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, for Ever and Ever. Amen"

Our hope of answers to prayer to our heavenly Father is well grounded, for His are the riches of the kingdom and His the resources of infinite power. Our prayers are well purposed, too, when they look to the glory of God. That He might be magnified for ever and ever is the Christian's deepest desire.

WHAT DOES THE WORD "AMEN" MEAN?

"It means that I should be assured that such petitions are acceptable to our heavenly Father, and are heard by Him; for He Himself has commanded us to pray in this manner, and has promised to hear us. Amen, Amen, that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so."

"Amen! that is, So let it be!
Strengthen our faith and trust in Thee.
That we may doubt not, but believe,
That what we ask we shall receive;
Thus in Thy name and at Thy word
We say Amen; now hear us, Lord!"

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Sixteenth Week: SOME HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 16. Our Need of Direction

"Show me thy ways, O Jehovah;
Teach me thy paths" (Ps. 25:4).

In our walking with God we have need of being directed.

We have our consciences which tell us when we do right and when we do wrong. But unless properly trained and guided our consciences are not always reliable. When sin came into the world, our spiritual and moral understanding was darkened. This accounts for some strange actions in the sphere of morality. For instance, that a mother in India thinks she is doing right when she throws into the river her little baby if the child happens to be born on an unlucky day.

Even in Christian lands there are people who have so seared their consciences by wilful wrong doing that the inner voice is no longer capable of sounding the alarm when a wrong is done or contemplated.

Knowing our natural limitations, God has set up some highway markers for us by which we may be guided along the way of righteous conduct and living. These markers are His Commandments, wherein He tells us what to do and what not to do. They warn us against the pitfalls of life and point out to us the safe roads to travel.

By a study of these Commandments our consciences are enlightened and may then serve as a much safer guide in our daily lives.

Our heavenly Father, we thank Thee that Thou art always mindful of our needs and hast provided us guidance upon our way. Help us to realize that Thy guideposts are an expression of Thy Fatherly love to lead us aright. Grant us for Jesus' sake grace to know and do Thy will. Amen.

Sixteenth Week: SOME HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 17. The Lawgiver

"And God spake all these words, saying: I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex. 20:1-2).

The Commandments are from Jehovah, our God. The One who was, is, and ever shall be is the author of the Law. It is no human invention, that has currency for a time and then is to be relegated to the scrap-pile. The law stands forever as God's authoritative pronouncement governing the relations of men to Himself and to one another.

There is supreme need of pointing to these revelations of God today when there prevails in certain quarters so much questioning as to what is right and wrong, when young people, especially, seem to be drifting about in a sea of uncertainty as to conduct and morals. Many people seem to think that they must try to discover the principles of right conduct by peering into their inner consciousness, or by studying the experiences of the race, or by the trial and error method in their own lives. To be sure some light can be had from these sources, but the trouble with many people is that they act as if these were the only means of knowing moral truth. They act as if God had never spoken a word about the whole matter.

In such a time we do well to give eager heed to a "Thus saith the Lord!" It is not necessary for young people to find out by bitter life-scarring "experiences" the ways of woe and virtue. Our Father in His loving concern for us would save us from all such grief and pain by giving us clear guidance from above.

O Lord our God, we honor Thee as our King and Master. Instill in us respect and love for Thy holy law. Give us hearts eager to obey Thee. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sixteenth Week: SOME HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 18. The Uses of the Law

"The law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1 Tim. 1:8).

The law has threefold uses.

First, it is a means in the hand of the Holy Spirit to show men their sins. By looking into the mirror of God's Commandments a man sees how far from perfection he is. He sees how selfish, unclean, unkind, and false he is. He stands convicted and realizes that the judgment of condemnation rests upon him because of his breaking of the law. He may thus be driven to seek pardon through Christ.

Another purpose of the law is its civic function. It is the basic means by which men may know how to make and enforce laws governing human life, reputation, and property. The foundations of all civilized governments are built consciously or unconsciously upon the law of God. And the more closely legal provisions harmonize with this law, the more just and righteous is the government.

In the third place, the law is useful and necessary for the life of the Christian in his progress in sanctification. By many people the Commandments are looked upon as unwelcome restrictions upon their free conduct. This is all a mistake. The law is an expression of God's love for us, whereby we may be helped into fruitful and happy life careers.

Dear God, instead of complaining, we most heartily thank Thee for the loving guidance Thou dost give us in Thy holy law. Without Thy light we should often go astray and be lost among the errors and uncertainties of our own spiritual and moral thinking. Help us to appreciate the illumination that Thou dost supply, and give us grace to profit by Thy precepts. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sixteenth Week: SOME HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 19. The Essence of the Law

One day a lawyer put to Jesus this question: "Which is the great commandment in the law?" He got this answer: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets"* (Matt. 22:36-40).

By this comprehensive answer Jesus has clearly shown us the essence of God's holy law. In harmony with this analysis, it has been customary to divide the Ten Commandments into two tables, the first dealing with love to God, and the second with love to ourselves and our neighbor.

Let us today consider the central thought of the First Table.

Just a short time before dying, Adolphe Monod, the well known French evangelical preacher, said: "I have strength for nothing more than to think about the love of God; He has loved us—that is the whole of dogmatics; let us love Him—that is the sum total of the ethics of the gospel."

Surely the evidences of God's love are abundant. He has given us life, sustained and preserved it. His rich blessings surround us on every hand. But the supreme proof is His Son whom He sent to be our Savior. *"Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him"* (1 John 4:9).

Should we not in return love such a God and such a Savior? Base ingratitude it would be to do anything else.

O God, move our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit to love Thee with sincere devotion, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Sixteenth Week: SOME HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 20. The First Commandment

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear, love and trust in God above all things."

We have said that the central thought of the First Table of the Law is love to God. Now how may we show our love? The First Commandment indicates one way—a basic way. Luther explains excellently the thought of the Commandment in those few pithy words: "Fear" God with a childlike and not a slavish fear; "Love" God by letting Him become very dear to us, by seeking our true joy in Him, and by gladly doing His will; "trust" God by resigning ourselves with full confidence to Him, expecting all good from Him, and placing all our affairs in His hand; and enthroning Him above all things.

Oh, how different the world would be if the hearts of men everywhere were dominated by such principles! Gone would be the idols and their temples, and the rivers of blood that flow from ten thousand sacrificial victims; gone would be the soul-cursing worship of money and pleasure and fame; gone would be the fear and worry and anxiety of Godless lives. In their place there would be the spiritual worship, the loving service, and the comforting trust that spring from faith in the one and only true God.

My God, I would exalt Thee, I would honor, fear, and love Thee, and trust in Thee. Drive out every rival from my heart and leave me with Thee alone as my King and my God. Wilt Thou so completely fill my life and dominate my thinking, my speaking, and my doing that I shall be thoroughly mastered by Thee. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sixteenth Week: SOME HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 21. The Second Commandment

"Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, conjure, lie, or deceive, by His Name, but call upon Him in every time of need, and worship Him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving."

A certain literary woman once represented herself as a sailor with the ambition to be able to swear steadily for three minutes without repeating herself. What a monstrous perversion of the wondrous gift of speech! How much more in harmony with the dignity of the human being in the presence of his exalted Creator and Savior is the spirit of the words:

> "Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
> My dear Redeemer's praise,
> The glories of my God and King,
> The triumphs of His grace!"

It would seem that the dishonoring of the name of God is a particularly grievous sin, for He adds to the commandment the solemn warning, "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain." It is necessary to speak out plainly against this sin in an iconoclastic age when apparently nothing holy is safe from the desecrating lips or pens of modern vandals.

Besides being a grievous sin against God, profanity reveals a deplorable lack of true culture. It is extremely offensive to right-thinking men and women.

Dear Father in heaven, guard our lips from profaning Thy holy Name. Let our love for Thee be so real that it shall appear in all our speaking of Thee. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Sixteenth Week: SOME HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 22. The Third Commandment

"Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we do not despise His Word and the preaching of the same, but deem it holy, and gladly hear and learn it."

One day a week has been designated as the Lord's Day. It is a welcome day of rest from the toil and the work-a-day troubles of life. God has been lovingly thoughtful of us in ordering such an arrangement.

While the day is ours to enjoy for rest and relaxation, it is also in an eminent sense the Lord's. It is the day intended especially for the worship of His holiness, for hearing and meditating upon His precious Word of grace, and for doing deeds of love in His name. What a beautiful day the Lord's Day may be. At the welcoming call of the church bell men, women and children move from all directions toward the house of the Lord; the sanctuary resounds with hymns of adoration and prayer; the spiritual Manna falls on hungry hearts; the Savior imparts Himself through the blessed Sacraments; and the benediction of God descends upon bowed heads. Thus spiritually reinforced, Christians go out into a needy world in a ministry of loving service.

Oh, God is wondrously good to us! Let us register our gratitude with the love of our hearts, the worship of our lips, the service of our hands.

"Thee will I love, my strength, my tower,
Thee will I love, my joy, my crown;
Thee will I love with all my power,
In all my works, and Thee alone:
Thee will I love, till the pure fire
Fill my whole soul with chaste desire."

Amen.

Seventeenth Week: MORE HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 23. The Fourth Commandment

"Honor thy father and mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we do not despise our parents and superiors, nor provoke them to anger, but honor, serve, obey, love and esteem them."

The Second Table of the Law deals with human relationships. Here, too, the dominant note is love. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." A person's relationships may be represented by a triangle, with God, neighbor, and self at the three vertices. If we are linked by love with God and our fellowmen, our relationships will be happy indeed.

Of all human relationships the closest and tenderest are those of the family circle. No matter how old we get, if the home life has been at all ideal, memory delights to go back to childhood days with mother and father, sisters and brothers.

Beautiful and happy is that home in which children respect, love, and obey their parents and in which parents love, protect, and guide their children. The practice of obedience profoundly affects character and influences every department of our being. A famous children's specialist expressed a significant observation when he said: "When it comes to a serious illness, the child who has been taught to obey stands four times the chance of recovery that the spoiled and undisciplined child does." A striking verification of God's promise attached to the Fourth Commandment!

Dear Father, we thank Thee for our Christian homes. Bless us in our fellowship together, and let love always govern our relationships one with another. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Seventeenth Week: MORE HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 24. The Fifth Commandment

"Thou shalt not kill."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we do our neighbor no bodily harm nor cause him any suffering, but help and befriend him in every need."

Would that the voice of God from Sinai might thunder into the ears of modern men the imperative injunction, "Thou shalt not kill."

Surely there is need of this Word of the Lord today when human lives seem to be so cheap. Any efforts made to check the killing mania will be largely fruitless unless there can be instilled into the minds and hearts of men a clear realization of the fact that the Commandment for the protection of human life is of divine origin, that murder is a sin against God, and that God's judgment rests heavily upon it. At this point it appears with particular clearness that religion must be back of morality if it is to work.

There is supreme need of the inculcation of the view that the lives of human beings are sacred because God is the Author of life and He alone has the right to determine its bounds.

Besides defying God, the murderer, whether it be of the body or of the soul, also reveals an anti-social spirit absolutely incompatible with the mind of Christ. He represents a perversion of human nature that bears eloquent testimony to the devastating power of sin.

O God in heaven, help us to look upon our own lives and the lives of others as sacred gifts from Thee. Save us from the murderous passions of hate and jealousy. Help us to show forth the spirit of kindness and helpfulness. Hear us, Christ, through Thy mercy. Amen.

Seventeenth Week: MORE HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 25. The Sixth Commandment

"Thou shalt not commit adultery."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we lead a chaste and pure life in word and deed, and that husband and wife love and honor each other."

What a fearful record the sin of impurity leaves behind it in the world. It ravages in royal circles and in filthy slums; it claims its victims among the rich and the poor; it fills hospitals and penitentiaries; it ruins families and destroys homes; it vitiates music and pollutes literature; it robs men and women of character and reputation; it destroys both body and soul.

No wonder the Bible, throughout, reinforces the Sixth Commandment. *"Fornication, and all uncleanness . . . let it not even be named among you as becometh saints"* (Eph. 5:4).

"Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9).

A mother advised her son to repeat the beatitudes when he met temptation, and the one, "Blessed are the pure in heart," he should repeat seven times. Impure words and impure deeds have their roots in an impure heart. Purity is a true test of manliness and womanliness. "An unclean incident is a reflection upon your mother, an insult to your sister, an indignity to your fair friend, and a dishonor to the magnificent manhood of America, of which you are a representative."

Dear Lord Jesus, Thou who wert tempted in all things like unto us, but without sin, help us to keep our hearts, lips, and lives clean, that our bodies may truly be dwelling places for the Holy Spirit. We pray in Thy holy name. Amen.

Seventeenth Week: MORE HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 26. The Seventh Commandment

"Thou shalt not steal."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we do not rob our neighbor of his money or property, nor bring them into our possession by unfair dealing or fraud, but help him to improve and protect his property and living."

At a slave market in one of the southern states, a bright, active colored boy was put up for sale. A kind master who pitied his condition, wishing him not to have a cruel owner, went up to him and said, "If I buy you, will you be honest?" The boy, with a look that baffled description, replied, "I will be honest whether you buy me or not."

Everyone recognizes that the kind of honesty displayed by this slave boy is something that the world is in sore need of. Whether it be in the store, in the bank, in the school room, or in political office, there is need of that sturdy morality which registers itself in strict honesty in secret as well as when the flash light of publicity is thrown upon one's work.

"Honesty is the best policy" does not represent a particularly high code of ethics, but it is certainly true that in the long run it pays to be honest.

So whether viewed from the standpoint of shrewd, human wisdom or in the light of God's holy will, the Commandment "Thou shalt not steal" is fundamentally well based.

Dear Lord in heaven, give me that profound love for and fear of Thee that will keep me going straight when temptations to dishonesty sweep in upon me. I dare not trust in my own strength. God help me for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Seventeenth Week: MORE HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 27. The Eighth Commandment

"Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we do not deceitfully belie, betray, backbite, nor slander our neighbor, but apologize for him, speak well of him, and put the most charitable construction on all that he does."

"Slander cuts men's throats with whispering." Oh, what an amount of irreparable harm has been done by false witnessing! What reputations have been ruined, what careers blasted, what lives embittered!

Of all hateful things we recoil at the venomous tongue that would blacken the name of a fellow human being. A rumor once started may be impossible to check in its career of injury. Even if our brother is at fault, why spread reports about his frailties?

> "There is so much evil in the best of us,
> And so much good in the worst of us,
> It behooves none of us
> To speak ill of the rest of us."

Let us rather go to our brother in a spirit of loving helpfulness, not to upbraid him with his sins in a "holier than thou" attitude, but to try to help him to see the danger of his course and to set his foot again upon the way of righteousness.

O God, help us to guard our tongues, so that we may not intentionally or unintentionally harm our fellowmen. Help us to speak the truth in love, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Seventeenth Week: MORE HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 28. The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we do not seek by craftiness to gain possession of our neighbor's inheritance or home, nor obtain them under pretense of a legal right, but assist and serve him in keeping the same."

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"We should fear and love God so that we do not estrange, or entice, away our neighbor's wife, servants, or cattle, but seek to have them remain and discharge their duty to him."

Covetousness engenders strife; it destroys friendship; it begets enmity; it shrivels the soul; it robs of heaven. It does all this even if it never issues in action. In the closing commandments God reaches down into the very depths of our being and lays bare the ugly desires hidden there. Not the spirit of selfish grasping but the spirit of unselfish giving should be the mark of the child of God.

All of the beautiful Christian qualities enjoined in God's law may be summed up in the one word, "Love." If Christian love is permitted to fill our hearts, there will be no place in our lives for disobedience, murder, impurity, stealing, slander, or covetousness.

If we would live rightly and happily with our fellowmen, let us beseech God for a more complete rule of the law of love in our hearts.

Dear Jesus, put into our hearts more and more of the spirit of love. We ask it in Thy name. Amen.

Seventeenth Week: MORE HIGHWAY MARKERS

April 29. God's Judgments

What does God declare concerning all these Commandments? He says:

"I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments."

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. We should, therefore, fear His wrath, and in no wise disobey them. But He promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them. We should, therefore, love Him, trust in Him, and gladly keep His commandments."

It is important that we should keep in mind constantly that the Commandments are the revealed expressions of God's holy will, and that we simply cannot escape them. Whether we like it or not, God's judgments are in accordance with these pronouncements. With earnest efforts therefore we should try to govern our lives by these precepts, and if we find, as we most surely shall, that we cannot altogether do the good things enjoined and avoid the evils forbidden, then let us go daily to the throne of grace for pardon and for strength to do better day by day.

Dear Lord, help us to become more and more holy, loving, and kind. Help us to become more and more like Jesus. Help us to realize the judgments of God upon sin. Grant us also the comfort of the assurance that rich blessings of God's mercy come to His obedient children. Give us more and more of the mind of the divine Son in our attitude to our Father. Amen.

Eighteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

April 30. The Creed

"We believe, and therefore also we speak" (2 Cor. 4:13).

As Lutheran Christians we have certain definite convictions and beliefs about God. These are set forth in the "Creed" of the church.

There are many people today who seem to have no interest in creeds and no sympathy for them. They say that religion should be a matter of feeling, or of aspirations, or a way of life. They say that they do not care for intellectual formulations in the sphere of religion.

Now certainly we know that Christianity is far more than creedal statements. A person may have a clear, intellectual comprehension of the great Christian principles, and yet not be a Christian.

But it is difficult to see how a religion can be maintained and transmitted from one generation to another without some definite set of teachings. Every organization of any consequence has its constitution or basic governing principles. Why should objection be made to this in the case of the church?

If the truth were told, we should most likely find that the objection to doctrine is not an objection to the principle of having doctrines but an objection to certain specific doctrines of Christianity which are objectionable to a certain class of religionists. In reality, every person who has any ideas of religion whatsoever holds some kind of doctrine. He cannot help himself.

Our dear Father in heaven, we thank Thee for the privilege of faith. We thank Thee also that Thou hast revealed to us the great saving truths Thou wouldst have us believe. Help us that our own faulty thinking may not stand in the way of a trusting faith. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Eighteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

May 1. God the Creator

The most universally accepted formulation of the Christian faith is the Apostles' Creed, so called because it embodies in brief compass the basic teachings of the Apostles.

Let us prayerfully meditate upon some of the glorious truths set forth in the three Articles of this Creed.

The First Article, of Creation.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that He has given and still preserves to me my body and soul, my eyes and ears, and all my members, my reason and all the powers of my soul, together with food and raiment, home and family, and all my property; that He daily provides abundantly for all the needs of my life, protects me from all danger, and guards and keeps me from all evil; and that He does this purely out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which I am in duty bound to thank, praise, serve, and obey Him. This is most certainly true."

We here definitely confess our faith in God as the Creator of all things. We are not left in the dark as to the problem of origins. We accept God's revelation, build our faith upon that, and glorify God as our Maker.

O God, as Thy creatures, we bow in humility in the presence of Thee as Creator. We praise Thee for Thy wisdom and power, everywhere revealed in Thy handiwork. Teach us truly to worship Thee. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Eighteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

May 2. God the Sustainer

"Bless the Lord, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits" (Ps. 103:2).

God is not merely the Author of both our physical and our spiritual life. He also preserves and sustains all our life by His wisdom, bounty, and grace. From the very beginning of our lives to the present hour we have been dependent upon the Father. Had His hand been withheld for one single moment, we must have perished. Protection from harm; food, clothing, and shelter for our bodies; education for our minds; the heavenly Manna for our souls; strength for our daily tasks—these are but a few of the unnumbered blessings we have received from our Father.

Sometimes the manifoldness of the duties we have to perform and the heaviness and the responsibilities we have to bear threaten to overwhelm us and rob us of our courage to carry on. How inspiriting is it not in such times to fall back upon the assurance of our Father's sustaining power!

A well-known evangelist, while engaged in a particularly difficult field, had his faith and courage reinforced in a particularly striking fashion. His little daughter, who was a paralytic, was sitting in her chair as he came home one day with a package for his wife. Going up to his little girl and kissing her, he asked, "Where is mother?"

"Mother is upstairs."

"Well, I have a package for her."

"Let me carry the package to mother."

"Why, Minnie dear, how can you carry the package? You cannot carry yourself."

With a smile on her face, Minnie said, "Oh, no, papa; but give me the package; I will carry the package and you will carry me."

O God, our Father, we thank Thee for Thy sustaining love. Help us to realize the privilege of our daily dependence on Thee. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Eighteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

May 3. The Image of God

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:26-27).

The station God gave to man was no common thing. In creating man in His own image and breathing into him the breath of life, God for all time exalted man above the brute. He lifted him up to a station near to the angels; yes, He formed man to be in a measure like Himself.

Many people look very cheaply upon human life; if not upon their own, upon that of others. But God in His creative love made human life a very precious thing. He gave to the soul a marvelous character, a sacred quality, an incalculable value.

Man was the culmination of the creative program; for him all other creative work was a preparation. All things were to contribute to man's welfare and happiness.

Let us never forget this that, even though the number of human beings is uncounted, every soul is precious beyond measure in the sight of God.

God our Father, we thank Thee for man's high estate and for the dignity of his being. We thank Thee for the high possibilities that Thou didst set before him and for the loving concern with which Thou didst surround him. Help us to look upon every human being as Thy creature; help us to have something of the concern of Jesus for human lives. We pray in His name. Amen.

Eighteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

May 4. A Prodigal Humanity

Man was the special object of God's great love. He was not only given life and a nature in the image of God; he was placed in a paradise of perfection, where everything ministered to his happiness.

But man did not appreciate the gift of God and the happy estate into which he had come. In sinful pride and shameful ingratitude, the parents of the race disobeyed God and brought upon themselves a fearful calamity.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6).

With the fall into sin came sorrow, sickness, and death, and the loss of Paradise.

God had not intended it that way. He loved man and wanted him to continue to be happy. But man was endowed with the power of choice and when he, under the influence of the tempter, exercised that free will in disobedience to God's specific commands, he brought the catastrophe upon himself.

The sin of our first parents and its consequences became the fearful heritage of the whole human race. *"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned"* (Rom. 5:12).

Dear Father in Heaven, we acknowledge that with all mankind we have been disobedient and sinned against Thee. Wilt Thou more and more convict us of the seriousness of sin in Thy sight, so that we may come to Thee for mercy in the name of Christ and receive power day by day to fight the good fight against sin. Amen

Eighteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

May 5. The Promise of Deliverance

Humanity became a prodigal, but the Father's love did not cease. God had given man breath of His breath, life of His life, and He could not endure the thought of a humanity permanently estranged from Him. His heart was too tender. He saw the unhappiness, misery, and despair into which mankind had plunged itself through disobedience. And He saw how man not only was afflicted with temporal disaster, but also was headed for eternal ruin.

So in accordance with the loving counsels of the holy Trinity, a plan of redemption and reclamation was announced. So great was God's love that this promise of deliverance was made immediately after the fall, in the familiar words:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

The promise of salvation was repeated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

In very general terms at first, but later in more specific promises, there runs through the whole of the Old Testament a golden thread of prophecy pointing to a divine deliverance, culminating in definite references to the Messiah as the Savior of the world.

Triune God, Thou God of infinite love, we do thank and praise Thee for Thy wondrous mercy and for Thy gracious plan of salvation. We thank Thee that Thou didst not leave mankind to suffer hopelessly the consequences of its folly and sin but didst announce a way of restoration into Thy fellowship. Make us very grateful to Thee and help us to love Thee sincerely. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Eighteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT GOD

May 6. Preparations

"The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15).

The Old Testament period of the world's history is a time of preparation for the coming of the Messiah.

In the providence of God the Jews were prepared through a long line of hard experiences to take their stand against idolatry and heathenism and through patient teaching to be the bearers of salvation.

The gentile peoples, too, were prepared for the coming of Christ. They had left God behind and, like the prodigal son, were given a chance to get thoroughly sick and tired of indulgence in sin and of wandering about without a knowledge of the true God. They were thus made eager to listen to a gospel of deliverance.

The world was also being prepared positively for the coming of the Savior. The nations were being unified through the instrumentality of the mighty Roman empire; barriers between peoples were being broken down; the Greek language was on the way to becoming universal; splendid roads facilitating travel were being built, and a usually war-afflicted world was brought to a state of peace. These and other factors contributed to the "fulness of time" for the ushering in of Christ's kingdom.

O God, we marvel at the sweep of Thy divine direction of the course of human history. We thank Thee that neither Satan, nor sin, nor kings, nor empires could stand in the way of Thy great plan for the redemption of the human race. Thou didst make all things serve Thy purposes. Help us in humility to acknowledge Thy wisdom, Thy power, and Thy love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Nineteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT CHRIST

May 7. The Second Article. Of Redemption

I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true Man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord; Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, bought me and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with silver and gold, but with His holy and precious blood, and with His innocent sufferings and death; in order that I might be His own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness; even as He is risen from the dead, and lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true."

What a marvelous summary of the central idea of the Christian faith. Here are set forth in brief compass the nature of Christ, His redemptive work, and His loving purpose for us as redeemed souls.

Lord Jesus Christ, we acknowledge Thee as Savior and Lord. Help us to understand the greatness of Thy redemptive love. Give us the desire to love and honor Thee with our whole being. Amen.

Nineteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT CHRIST

May 8. The Incarnation

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . **And the Word became flesh,** and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth"* (John 1:1, 14).

In working out God's great love plan for the world's redemption, it was necessary that the Son of God should come to earth in human form, that the Eternal Word should become flesh. In no other way could God concretely reveal Himself to men or so clearly show the noble possibilities of our human nature.

Think what we would have missed if Christ had not thus come in the flesh! His words of wisdom and beauty, His deeds of power and kindness, His holy indignation at unrighteousness and hypocrisy, His infinite compassion for repentant sinners, His intimate prayer life with the Father, His life of perfect obedience—everything about Him made clearer far the nature of God as well as the possibilities of human beings.

But most fundamentally the necessity of His incarnation was that as the God-man He might give His life in death for the world's redemption.

A little Son, the virgin-born,
True God from everlasting,
To rescue us who were forlorn,
His lot with us is casting:
It moved His tender heart to see
This world of sin and misery
In condemnation lying;
Therefore He came from realms above
Down to our earth, drawn by His love,
To soothe our grief and sighing.

For all this, Lord Jesus, we thank Thee. Amen.

Nineteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT CHRIST

May 9. Christ's Humiliation

"And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20).

One might have expected that the Son of the Highest would have been received in royal fashion. But instead of being born in a palace surrounded by all the comforts that wealth could supply, He was given as His birth place a stable and as His cradle a manger. Humanity will never tire of hearing the wondrous story of His coming in such lowly fashion. It brings Him close to the heart of the whole race. No barrier of caste separates the poorest among men from Him.

As its beginning so was His life throughout. He had no earthly home of His own. The animals of the fields and the birds of the heavens were better off than He.

And when the end came, He had no bank account or material estate to leave behind. The soldiers divided His clothes. That was all He had. "He was born in a borrowed stable, laid in a borrowed manger, found refuge in a borrowed home, and was buried in a borrowed tomb." But He has enriched the world far beyond any other being that ever lived among men. He gave to earth the riches of heaven.

> In poorest guise to us He came,
> Himself He bears our sin and shame,
> That as His heirs in heaven above,
> We may with angels share His love.
> Hallelujah.

Dear Jesus, we cannot with our poor thanks express in any adequate way the gratitude due Thee for Thy serving love. But we pray that our love to Thee may grow and that we may show it in our lives. We ask this in Thy own name. Amen.

Nineteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT CHRIST

May 10. Christ's Obedience

"For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

A part of Christ's work was to fulfill the law in our stead. And He did live a life of perfect obedience. He challenged anyone to convince Him of any sin, and no one took up the challenge.

Judas testified, "I have betrayed innocent blood." Pilate's wife warned her husband, "Have thou nothing to do with this righteous man." And Pilate himself, after a judicial examination, rendered the verdict, "I find no fault in him."

If Jesus had sinned Himself, He could not have saved others. But by His perfect obedience He won for us a complete righteousness, which is ours for the asking.

By His perfect obedience, too, He gave us an example to emulate. That is why Paul could say: *"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2:5-8).

Holy Jesus, we thank Thee for Thy sinlessness and for Thy perfect comformity to Thy Father's will. We thank Thee that Thou didst live a life of spotless holiness and of serving love. Help us to accept Thy righteousness to cover up our own sin and shame. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Nineteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT CHRIST

May 11. Christ's Suffering

Since Christ came to redeem us from the guilt of sin He had to take upon Himself the punishment that we should have borne. This He did by His suffering in our stead all through His life, but more especially in Gethsemane, during His trial, and on Calvary.

No words can better describe His substitutionary suffering than the inspired prophecy in Isaiah 53. In reading this passage, place the emphasis on the pronouns "He" and "Him" on the one hand, and "we" and "our" on the other.

"He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? And they made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death; although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isaiah 53:3-9).

"Hail, Thou once despised Jesus!
Hail, Thou Galilean King!
Thou didst suffer to release us;
Thou didst free salvation bring.
Hail, Thou agonizing Savior,
Bearer of our sin and shame!
By Thy merits we find favor;
Life is given through Thy name."

Amen.

Nineteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT CHRIST

May 12. Christ's Death and Burial

"And they crucified Him" (Luke 23:33).

We come at last to that solemn hour when the Son of God, nailed to the cross, is dying for the sins of the world.

"O world, behold upon the tree
Thy life is hanging now for thee:
Thy Savior yields His dying breath.
The mighty Prince of glory now
For thee doth unresisting bow
To cruel stripes, to scorn and death."

"And Jesus, crying with a loud voicè, said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said this, he gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46).

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man the creature's sin!"

Jesus was dead, and there was left the sad and heavy duty of laying away His beloved body in the tomb. Loving hands were there to perform the sacred rite. The tomb was closed and sealed with a great stone.

"O darkest woe!
Ye tears, forth flow!
Has earth so sad a wonder,
That the Father's only Son
Now lies buried yonder!

O Jesus blest!
My help and rest!
With tears I pray—Lord, hear me;
Make me love Thee to the last;
In the grave be near me!"

Amen.

Nineteenth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT CHRIST

May 13. The Resurrection

"Now late on the sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:1-6).

The grave could not hold the Prince of life. He triumphed over death. Therefore Christians can sing on Easter morning:

"'Tis the spring of souls today,
Christ hath burst His prison,
And from three days' sleep in death
As a sun hath risen;
All the winter of our sins,
Long and dark, is flying
From His light, to whom we give
Laud and praise undying."

The seeming defeat of Christ was turned into a magnificent victory. The seal of God's approval was placed on Christ's redemptive work.

"Thanks to Thee, O Christ victorious!
Thanks to Thee, O Lord of life!
Death hath now no power o'er us;
Thou hast conquered in the strife;
Thanks because Thou didst arise,
And hast opened Paradise!
None can fully sing the glory
Of the resurrection story."

Amen.

Twentieth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

May 14. The Third Article

Of Sanctification

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body; and the Life everlasting. Amen.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith; in like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He daily forgives abundantly all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will grant everlasting life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true."

In this Third Article of our faith we confess our absolute dependence upon the divine agency of the Holy Spirit for bringing us into that relationship with Christ in which He can give us forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The Spirit is therefore a precious helper and friend.

Holy Spirit, we thank Thee for Thy willingness to work in our hearts a saving faith. Grant that we may not by willfulness or stubbornness resist Thy gracious influence upon us. Come to us with illumination; come to us with guidance; come to us with power. Make us eager to be led by Thee into fulness of life in Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen.

Twentieth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

May 15. A Finished Work

"All things are ready: Come to the marriage feast" (Matt. 22:4).

Just before Christ died on the cross He uttered the very significant words: "It is finished." He declared thereby that He had carried out the program of redemption for which He had come to earth, that He had made a full atonement for the sins of the world. Therefore, when He died, the veil in the temple between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was rent in two, symbolizing that now there was open access for the sinner to come to God. Christ thus opened heaven to men. This is why we can sing in one of our hymns:

"Now reconciled is God, my Lord;
The gates of heaven are open."

We do well to remember that Christ's redemptive work was complete as a historical fact nineteen hundred years ago. There is nothing left undone. There is nothing God could do to bring back a prodigal humanity that has not been done. "All things are ready" for our salvation.

It is upon this completed work that the Holy Spirit bases His work with the souls of men. It is upon this foundation that are based the possibility of individual salvation and the entire work of the Holy Spirit through the Christian Church.

Triune God, we thank Thee for the wondrous salvation wrought out for us. We thank Thee that a perfect redemption has been prepared for us by the work of Jesus Christ. We rejoice because all things are ready. Give us receptive hearts that we may gladly receive the great gift Thou art ready and eager to bestow. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Twentieth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

May 16. The Promise of the Holy Spirit

Towards the close of His earthly ministry Jesus had much to say concerning the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who in a special way was to be given to the faithful after His own departure. With these prophecies were associated many wonderful promises.

Thus we read:

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth" (John 14:16-17).

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you. And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:7-8).

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:12-14).

Truly wonderful things did Jesus associate with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Dear Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for Thy thoughts and plans for us. We thank Thee that Thou didst not leave us comfortless. Help us to understand the precious gift of the Holy Spirit. Give us grace to realize the many wonderful things the Spirit is ready to do for us. Help us to open our lives to His influence. Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twentieth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

May 17. The Coming of the Spirit

Fifty days after Easter and ten days after Christ's ascension, while the disciples were engaged in prayer in that upper room of hallowed memories, the prophecies of the coming of the Holy Spirit were fulfilled. Luke has given us a vivid description of the remarkable event:

"And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. And when this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speaking in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galilaeans? And how hear we, every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?"

"And they were all amazed, and were perplexed, saying one to another, What meaneth this?" (Acts 2:1-8; 12).

Surely it was not strange that amazement filled the hearts of the disciples. This was something of extraordinary character. It was clearly a communication from God to men in a supernatural way.

Mighty and merciful God, we thank Thee for the wondrous manifestations of Thy power and love. Help us in a spirit of humility to worship Thee. Grant us grace to receive the Holy Spirit as coming from Thee. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twentieth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

May 18. Effects of the Spirit's Coming

The results of the Spirit's coming were profoundly significant. The miracle of the speaking with tongues was symbolical of how the Gospel was to be preached in many languages. Surely this has received a wonderful fulfillment in the fact that the Bible, in whole or in part, has been translated into upwards of a thousand different languages and dialects.

Another striking result was the transformation of the disciples in point of spiritual insight, hopefulness, and courage. Witness the inspired preaching of Peter, who a few weeks before had shamefully denied his Lord.

The Holy Spirit working through the Apostles produced in the people a genuine conviction of sin and an earnest appeal for mercy. As a consequence we read:

"They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

"And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved" (Acts 2:41-47).

We praise Thee, God, for the power of Thy Spirit and for Thy transforming grace in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Twentieth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

May 19. The Methods of the Spirit

It is exceedingly instructive to note how the Holy Spirit operated on the first Pentecost Day.

Examine carefully this record:

"Then they that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:41-42).

We notice first that the Spirit worked through human beings. He came with power upon the apostles and made them His efficient agents for carrying out His will. Thus the Spirit has continued to operate and has honored us Christians by making us partners with Him in the blessed program of winning souls for Christ and His kingdom.

We notice further that the Spirit used specific means, namely the Word, Baptism, and the breaking of bread, or the Lord's Supper. These three Means of Grace Spirit-directed Christians have continued to employ in the enterprise of reclaiming and upbuilding human beings. Other means have been tried, but always without enduring success. The Word and the Sacraments are the divinely appointed means through which the Holy Spirit brings about conviction of sin, offers grace, and imparts life to all who with living faith are willing to receive the blessed gift of salvation.

"Heavenly Consoler, with unction celestial,
Heal Thou the wounds of each sin-burdened heart!
Strengthen our faith, and with zeal Pentecostal
Fill our faint souls, and Thy blessings impart!
Create within us new hearts and new spirits;
Lead us in truth, and sustain us in woe;
Teach us true faith in the dear Savior's merits
So that at death we Thy power may know!"

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Twentieth Week: WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

May 20. The Christian Church

The first Pentecost, with its three thousand converts united in fellowship, may be called the birthday of the Christian Church. From that day on it continued to grow: *"The Lord added to them day by day those that were saved"* (Acts 2:47).

The Church is no human invention. It is a divine institution for the administration of the means of grace, for Christian fellowship, for benevolent service, and for efficient extension of the kingdom. Christ laid the foundation, Himself being the chief corner-stone: *"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"* (Matt. 16:18).

From the very beginning the Apostles recognized the principle of church organization with chosen officers and orderly direction. In Paul's methods and writings in particular much attention was given to the instruction of Christians in the matter of their church life. Therefore, when in the present age we hear slighting remarks about the church as an institution, we do well to bear in mind that while the organized church has its limitations, it is still God's own institution and is worthy of the respect due to that which belongs to God. It is through the visible church with its divine means of Grace that the Holy Spirit normally works to create Christians for membership in that invisible church, the body of Christ.

"Heavenly Spirit, all others transcending,
Thou who with Father and Son dost abide!
Come Thou, our spirits in unity blending,
Come and make ready the heavenly bride!
Calling and gathering, and Jesus declaring,
Building God's Church, shedding light from above
Come, O Thou Spirit of God, never tiring,
Come and interpret God's wonderful love."

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-First Week: TEMPTATION

May 21. A Universal Experience

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4:1).

Whatever grace has been received in baptism, whatever wisdom has come through Christian nurture, whatever power through the expanding life, it nevertheless remains true that every Christian meets with temptation. It is absolutely unavoidable. As long as this life lasts, the enemies of our souls—the Devil, the world, and our own flesh—will make assaults upon us.

It was not accidental that Jesus was tempted of the Devil. If He was to be tried in all things as a human being, He must needs endure temptation. His experiences would not have been complete without it.

And none of us need hope to escape temptation. We never become so holy but that there is something in us to which a sinful appeal may be made. We never become so strong but that there is a possibility of our falling. The holiest of saints through all the ages bear testimony to the reality of temptation. It is a universal experience.

It is impossible to avoid temptation. But, by the grace of God, we can resist it and learn something from it. That is our concern as Christians.

Dear Lord, help us to realize that the enemies of our souls are ever striving to destroy us. Save us from a false security. Help us to be constantly on our guard and to make use of all the means placed in our hand with which to fight against the evil one. Give us a steadfast assurance that by Thy help we shall triumph over temptation. Help us always therefore to seek strength from Thee. Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twenty-First Week: TEMPTATION

May 22. The Source of Temptation

"And Jehovah God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:13).

What is the source of temptation? The Bible does not leave us in doubt. Satan is the real author of temptation. At the very dawn of human history the subtle tempter appeared and, by his beguilements, brought ruin upon the whole race. And every effort God has made to restore the fallen race Satan has resisted with all his might. When the Son of Man appeared, the devil summoned all his subtlety and skill in a supreme endeavor to defeat the purposes of the Redeemer. He was defeated in the battle, but has not ceased his attacks upon Christ's followers.

But Satan does not reveal his real nature in the temptations with which he seeks to beguile Christians. He comes under the cover of attractive allurements. Sometimes it is through our own desires and lusts, and he subtly tries to make us believe that it is right always to follow our inclinations. A current philosophy tells us to live our own lives, indulge our appetites, seek our own good; it scorns the idea of sacrifice and labor for others. Sometimes the temptation comes through our associates and even our friends. And always the glitter and glory and gayety of the world, like a magnet, draw the hearts of the Christians.

The forms of temptation are many, but the author is always the same, and the purpose is the same—Satan is trying to rob us of God.

O God, help us that Satan may not prevail over us and entice us away from Thee. Help us to see his snares that we may not be entangled in them and be made his prisoners. Help us to be free in Thee. Amen.

Twenty-First Week: TEMPTATION

May 23. The Armor of God

"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:10-18).

The chief weapon in the equipment of the Christian soldier for resisting the onslaughts of the enemy is the Word of God. This was the instrument Jesus used. Three times He drove back the tempter with a word of Scripture. He thereby set us an excellent example which, if we follow it, will give us victory in many a hard tussle with temptation. Happy is the young Christian who knows his Bible and how to use it.

"Use thou the word
Of God, thy Lord;
All else is unavailing;
Every thought and passion guard
With this shield unfailing."

We thank Thee, Lord Jesus, for Thy victory in the hour of temptation. Give us wisdom and courage to conquer through Thy Word of power. Amen.

Twenty-First Week: TEMPTATION

May 24. Resisting Temptation by Watchfulness

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

How may we resist temptation and win over it? The first essential is to be awake to the danger we face. Shakespeare gave expression to a deeply significant truth in the words: "Security is mortals' chiefest enemy." Overconfidence was Peter's chief fault. He was so sure that he would not be false to his Master that he was not aware of his own weakness, and he fell into grievous sin.

We are always in danger of becoming careless, of falling asleep spiritually, and of settling down into a false security. Before we know it, temptation is upon us and sweeps us off our feet. We are caught unawares. We therefore find many admonitions in God's word to take heed, keep awake, and watch.

In temporal warfare the necessity of being constantly on guard belongs to the very A. B. C. of military tactics, and it is a very serious offense indeed for a guard to be found asleep at his post. To fail in spiritual guard duty is even more serious, for here eternal values are at stake. Jesus recognized our weakness when He urged: "Watch ye therefore . . . . and what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

"I walk in danger all the way;
The thought shall never leave me,
That Satan, who has marked his prey,
Is plotting to deceive me.
This foe with hidden snares
May seize me unawares
If e'er I fail to watch and pray:
I walk in danger all the way."

Dear Jesus, help us to be watchful. Let us not fall into the dangerous sleep of indifference and carelessness. Help us to be constantly on our guard against all forms of sin. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Twenty-First Week: TEMPTATION

May 25. Resisting Temptation by Prayer

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).

Watchfulness is generally associated with prayer as a guard against temptation. It has been said that the Devil flees from a man on his knees before God.

Prayer is aligning oneself with the almighty power of God; and "one with God is a majority." God is willing and eager to pour strength into our weak lives; but there must be a channel for the inflow of His power. Prayer opens the way.

Paul said: "When I am weak, then am I strong." By this seemingly paradoxical statement he would express the great truth that when he felt weak in himself he was willing to fall back on the strength of God. What Christian has not experienced the very same thing and by appeal to God has received reinforcement that has greatly surprised him? "God's strength has been made perfect in weakness."

If therefore you would be strong to resist temptation, begin the day with prayer. Face God before you face men, and you shall experience unexpected power to live the day strongly, consistently, and beautifully. From God's presence you shall go forth glad and hopeful, sensitive to the ugliness of sin and the beauty of holiness and with the strength of God to keep your way clean.

"Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
Take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful,
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness—
Take it to the Lord in prayer!"

O Christ, our victorious Lord, help us to fly to Thee in the hour of temptation. Make us strong by Thy divine power. Amen.

Twenty-First Week: TEMPTATION

May 26. Resisting Temptation by Keeping Busy

"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom: pride, fulness of bread, and prosperous ease was in her and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy" (Ezekiel 16:49).

In this passage, from Ezekiel, the iniquity of Sodom is attributed, among other things, to abundance of idleness. And all experience bears out the truth that in idleness there lurk the demons of temptation to many a sin. "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." Work is a blessing. It occupies the mind, busies the hand, supplies an outlet for the abundance of youthful energy, and furnishes a host of vital interests. A life filled with work is in a fair way to escape altogether many of the temptations that flesh is heir to. Work in itself is a good thing, but when it is conceived of in terms of service to God and fellowmen, it is still more highly ennobled, and affords a still stronger stay against temptation. The Sodomites were reproved for not strengthening the hand of the poor and needy. They thought only of themselves, their own comforts, and ease. And iniquity flourished in their midst.

If you would save yourself from many an ugly temptation, get busy doing things for others. You will then have so many fine, unselfish interests to occupy your thoughts and your time that the base and mean and unclean things can find no room in your life. You will keep out the evil by occupying yourself with good things.

Dear God, we thank Thee for the blessings of work. Help us to fill our lives so full with worth while interests and activity that temptation shall not triumph over us. We ask it for Christ's sake. Amen.

Twenty-First Week: TEMPTATION

May 27. Victory Assured

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13).

This is a comforting assurance from God. Sometimes temptations come upon us with such force that we almost despair of our ability to withstand. In such moments let us remember that God is faithful and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. And let us also remember that we are not alone. Christ stands at our side ready to help if we will but let Him. He is well aware of our difficulty, and is altogether able to sympathize with us. *"For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted"* (Heb. 2:18).

So relying upon the sustaining power of God, let us enter into the spirit of Paul's triumphant faith:

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:37-39).

"Stood we alone in our own might,
Our striving would be losing;
For us the one true Man doth fight,
The Man of God's own choosing.
Who is this chosen One?
'Tis Jesus Christ, the Son,
The Lord of hosts, 'tis He
Who wins the victory
In every field of battle."

Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for the assurance of victory over all temptation through Thee. Give us a triumphant faith. Amen.

Twenty-Second Week: THE WAY OF THE PRODIGAL

May 28. A Sad Picture

"And he said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country; and there he wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that country" (Luke 15:11-14).

How wonderfully good God is to us! He gives us life; and sustains it; He comes to meet us in Baptism and makes us His children; He gives us Christian parents, pastors, and teachers; He supplies us richly with the bread of life; He makes full provision for a growing, expanding, joyous Christian life. And yet, all too often, we see young men and women turning their backs on God and going away from Him into the companionship of the world.

Every year there stands before the altar of the Lord in our churches a splendid host of young Christians solemnly confessing their faith and promising faithfulness to God until death. But every year, too, we see large numbers of these same young people drifting farther and farther away from God. What a sad sight! How it makes the heart of a father, mother, pastor, teacher bleed in pain! And how it must grieve the heart of Jesus to see those whom He has purchased with His life blood, and to whom His love has so often been proclaimed, turn from Him and despise the salvation He has brought.

O God, have pity upon our young people. Though many of them turn from Thee, turn not Thou from them. Pour out Thy Spirit upon our young Christians that in vital fellowship with Thee they may be preserved from spiritual death. In Thy name we ask it. Amen.

Twenty-Second Week: THE WAY OF THE PRODIGAL

May 29. Impatience of Restraint

What is the reason that so many young people enter upon the way of the prodigal?

One reason is indicated in our Lord's parable of the prodigal son: *"And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me"* (Luke 15:12). From one point of view the younger son's attitude may be called impatience of restraint. He wanted to get away from home.

From what we learn of his father later in the parable, we know that he had a good home. But in the impatience of youth the young son seemingly felt that he didn't have freedom enough. He thought that he was held in check too closely by his parents, that the atmosphere of the home was too religious, and that he didn't have as much money to spend as some of his friends had; so he wanted to get away, where he could live his life more freely.

Foolish boy! He didn't realize how fortunately he was situated and didn't appreciate his home or his parents' love and concern for him.

And yet isn't there a serious lesson also for fathers and mothers here? The young birds will leave the nest some day. Is it not better to help them learn to fly safely, than to be always clipping their wings? Blessed are the fathers and mothers who have the wisdom to be friends and guides in the proper development of the legitimate spirit of independence of youth.

Dear Father in heaven, wilt Thou in Thy great mercy bless our homes. Plant love and respect and appreciation in the hearts of the children and grant to the fathers and mothers wisdom, understanding, and loving patience. Help us that in our homes we may experience a bit of heaven on earth. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Second Week: THE WAY OF THE PRODIGAL

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May 30. The Lure of the World

"And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country" (Luke 15:13).

Another factor in the making of the prodigal is the lure of the world; the call of the far country.

It is along this line that Satan gets in some of his deadliest work. The home life with parents and God he pictures as strict and dull and uninteresting. But the world—how wonderfully attractive he makes it look, how free and happy and interesting; how beautiful the great white way at night. How alluringly the theatre lights glitter; how enticingly the music floats down from the dance halls, and how invitingly the poolhalls bid one enter. How carefree and jolly people seem to be—no conscience, seemingly, to bother them at all. How well dressed they are; how freely they spend money. How comfortably they glide along in their cars.

Yes, we must admit that Satan has a way of dressing up the world to make it look wonderfully attractive—so attractive indeed that no young person of his own strength can stand against it.

> "If the world my heart entices
> On the broad and easy road,
> And doth by its gay devices
> Silence every thought of God,
> When the heavy load I see,
> Which, dear Lord, was laid on Thee,
> I can still each wild emotion,
> Calm and blest in my devotion."

Gracious God and heavenly Father, have pity upon the young people whose imagination has been captured by the lure of the world. Help them to understand that the seeming attractiveness of the world is a part of Satan's crafty scheme to draw their hearts away from Thee. Open wide their eyes to see the true beauty and glory and the enduring satisfactions of the life with Thee and thus be proof against the wiles of the devil. We pray in Thy own blessed name. Amen.

Twenty-Second Week: THE WAY OF THE PRODIGAL

May 31. Impurity

Chafing under restraint and drawn by the lure of the world, the younger son in the parable went off into a far country, *"and there he wasted his substance in riotous living"* (Luke 15:13).

This suggests another temptation that is a fruitful means of drawing many people away from God. It is a delicate matter to speak about, but in all frankness and soberness, as in the presence of God, we need to call out warningly against the temptations to impurity.

"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed" (Jas. 1:14).

The functions God has given us for our finest happiness and for the blessing of the race are capable of being perverted to the basest and most shameful purposes; therefore, the supreme necessity of being on guard.

We are living in an age which, in many respects, tends to an overstimulation of the passions. The relations of young men and women are often dangerously unrestrained. That delicate modesty which should characterize young people is often broken down and replaced by indecent familiarity. This is the chief menace of the modern dance.

Young friend, if you would be happy, guard your purity more than your very life. And if you would succeed, lay hold with all your might upon the resources that God has placed within your reach for your reinforcement. Especially remember what Christ has done for you, in the spirit of the hymn:

> "Should some lust or sharp temptation
> Prove too strong for flesh and blood,
> Lo! I think upon Thy passion,
> And the breach is soon made good:
> Or should Satan press me hard,
> Thinking I am off my guard,
> Christ, I say, for me was wounded,
> And the tempter flees confounded."

O God, preserve the young people in the purity of their manhood and womanhood. Make them strong with Thy sustaining power, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Twenty-Second Week: THE WAY OF THE PRODIGAL

June 1. Having One's Fling

A pernicious doctrine current in certain quarters in our day is the idea that it is a good thing for a young person to have his fling for a while and that he will then settle down with a more adequate idea of what the world is. Under the influence of such a philosophy, many a young man has argued: "I've got to have a little experience. I've got to know something of the world if I am going to make a success of living in it. I don't want to be a hothouse product. And it can't hurt me. Just this glass of liquor, or this dance, or this escapade surely isn't anything to be afraid of. I can stop when and where I want to."

Poor fellow; he doesn't realize how many thousands have said exactly the same thing and have gone on and on until they awakened one day to find themselves slaves to sin, or, what is worse, many never awaken at all because they have lost all desire to step back.

There is divine wisdom in the proverb:

> *"My son, if sinners entice thee,*
> *Consent thou not"* (Prov. 1:10).

The trouble with young people who are under the influence of the "fling" philosophy is that they do not wish to resist temptation; their ideas have been hopelessly perverted.

O God, wilt Thou in mercy protect young people from the morally enervating doctrines of this day. Save their precious lives from the poison that kills both body and soul. Help them to understand that life is a gift from Thee and is to be lived to Thy glory and honor. Lead them into honorable and useful careers that may bring satisfaction to themselves and joy to their loved ones. Grant our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twenty-Second Week: THE WAY OF THE PRODIGAL

June 2. Drifting

One very common cause of losing God is the habit of simply drifting.

The young person has set before him no high ideal in life—nothing to call forth the best that is in him. He is satisfied to be with the crowd and be like the crowd—not particularly bad perhaps, nor particularly good; just average; satisfied to drift with the stream; not aware, apparently, that this course is ever downward. The idea of taking ahold of the oars and turning the boat against the current does not appeal to him. It takes too much energy to row up stream. He hasn't the courage to be different from the rest, to endure hardship for the sake of an ideal, to set aside his ease and comfort for the sake of a higher attainment; and so he falls an easy prey to the various temptations to indulgence that come along.

Dear friend, have you ever really faced the fact that you have just one life to live? You will have no other chance. Can you really afford to fritter away in nothingness this God-given life of yours?

Contrast with the attitude of drifting the magnificently robust idealism of Paul: *"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 3, 12-14).

Dear Lord, lift up the eyes of the young people to see the possibilities of a life lived under the influence of high ideals. Plant Thou in their hearts an abiding desire to make their lives count for humanity and for God. Hear our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twenty-Second Week: THE WAY OF THE PRODIGAL

June 3. Forgetting God

"My people have forgotten me" (Jer. 18:15).

The basic reason so many of our young people enter upon the way of the prodigal is that they forget God. This forgetting means several things: It means forgetting God's wonderful love and kindness; forgetting to thank Him; forgetting to pray. It means neglecting to use God's precious word; staying away from the Lord's Supper; being careless about church attendance and participation in Christian activities. It means the deadening of conscience, and a growing love for the world.

It doesn't all happen at once. It is a gradual process. The first time the young Christian forgets to pray it hurts him; the second time it doesn't pain so much, and pretty soon it doesn't bother him at all. The same with his Bible reading, and with church attendance. Step by step neglect gradually settles into habit.

It is the same with sin. The first time conscience sounds a ringing alarm; but if it isn't heeded, the signal is less distinct the second time. The vital connection with God, the source of light and life, is gradually broken; the light flickers and goes out. God is forgotten. How unutterably sad to see a soul die!

> "On my heart imprint Thine image,
> Blessed Jesus, King of grace,
> That life's riches, cares, and pleasures,
> Have no power Thee to efface;
> This the superscription be:
> Jesus, crucified for me,
> Is my life, my hope's foundation,
> And my glory and salvation."

Lord Jesus, Thou hast loved us with a great love; Thou hast given Thyself in death for us. Oh, help us that we may not in shameful ingratitude forget Thy love and sacrifice and turn our backs on Thee. Keep us steadfast, in the way of life. Amen.

Twenty-Third Week: IN THE FAR COUNTRY

June 4. A Desire Fulfilled

"And he took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:13).

The prodigal son had tired of his home, and had been longing for a life in the big, wide world, free from all restraint. His father no doubt was very reluctant to see him go, but he gave him his part of the inheritance. The young man then set out into the world in search of happiness and freedom. And he found it, he thought. He had youth, good looks perhaps, good clothes, and money; he found many friends in the far country who were more than willing to help him have a good time. A young man in his situation need not look long for companions, either men or women.

And so he had a gay time with shows and dances and suppers and drinking bouts and joy rides and worse things, carousing late into the night, sleeping as late as he wished in the morning, and then the same program over again, spending right and left the money his father had worked hard to save. This, he thought, was the life.

And so have many others thought. Are they right? Is this the purpose for which God made us? Is it for such a goal that Christ redeemed us with His own blood? Is this the career for which mothers and fathers have cared for us in our tender infancy, watched over us in times of illness, toiled early and late to provide us with food, clothing, and shelter, and given us an education at great sacrifice to themselves?

Oh, how unworthy of young people to show such disregard for the blessings of God and a good home! How base to pervert to such low uses a life destined for a nobility of significant achievement.

God, help the young people rightly to realize the meaning and the possibilities of life. Guard them from fatal misdirection of their God-given energies. Save them for the service of Thee. Amen.

Twenty-Third Week: IN THE FAR COUNTRY

June 5. Money Gone

"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want" (Luke 15:14).

One day the prodigal awoke to the fact that his money was gone. Perhaps he got a notice from the bank that his account was overdrawn. That must have given him a rude shock.

But isn't it a true picture? How many sons of the rich have squandered their inheritance in just the same way! They seem to strike a pace and can't stop or don't care to stop as long as there is anything to go on. No thought or care for the future, when the famine may come. Remember the times of the World War: When wages were high and times good, people spent their easily gotten money foolishly and extravagantly; so they had nothing for the day when the famine of hard times came.

Even brute creation oftentimes seems wiser than men.

"Go to the ant, thou sluggard;
Consider her ways, and be wise:
Which having no chief, overseer, or ruler,
Provideth her bread in the summer,
And gathereth her food in the harvest.
How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep:
So shall thy poverty come as a robber,
And thy want as an armed man." (Pro. 6:6-11.)

God, give us the right sense of stewardship. Help us that our money may not bring about our own ruin. Save us from a perverted sense of values, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

June 6. Fun at an End

When the prodigal's money was gone, his fun too came to a sudden end. That is the way with such pleasures and enjoyments as are dependent upon the lavish spending of money.

Now, God is not opposed to a good time. In fact He wants His children to be happy and enjoy themselves. The very beauty of the world in which we live, the many fine things He gives us to enjoy, and the capacity within us to be glad in the enjoyment of God's blessings all indicate that God's thoughts for us are thoughts of gladness.

> *"Light is sown for the righteous,*
> *And gladness for the upright in heart.*
> *Be glad in Jehovah, ye righteous;*
> *And give thanks to his holy memorial name"*
> (Ps. 97:11-12).

But there are ways of enjoying oneself that do not fall in with God's plans for our happiness. There are pleasures that are either sinful in themselves or lead to sin. Of such God warns us to beware.

It may be said furthermore that the simpler, the less expensive, the less extravagant forms of amusement are often in the long run most satisfying. The forms of fun that tend to overstimulation, in one way or another, constantly call for something still more thrilling until nothing is able to satisfy the perverted appetite. Then comes that killing sense of nothing more to live for.

Happy indeed is that young person who has been able to maintain a sane and balanced attitude toward amusements and who can really have a good time without extravagance.

Dear Lord, teach us the secret of true and abiding happiness. Help us to seek our pleasures in such ways as are in harmony with Thy will. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Third Week: IN THE FAR COUNTRY

June 7. Friends Gone

"And he began to be in want . . . . and no man gave unto him" (Luke 15:14. 16).

The prodigal thought he had friends. But when his money was gone, his would-be friends dropped him without ceremony.

That is the way of the world's friendship. It is all right as long as you have money and make yourself a good fellow. But do not for a moment depend on such friendship in the day of need. Some of your Christian friends may not have much money, or if they have, they are not in the habit of spending it foolishly in giving you an extravagant, good time. But they can be depended upon in time of trouble. And a friend in need is a friend indeed. It is when disaster comes that the display of true Christian friendship is most marked. Oh, yes, there are some notable exceptions, but the pages of Christian history are adorned with acts of unselfish friendliness in times of distress.

If you would have true friends, do not try to buy them with money or with anything money can do. Build your friendships on a foundation of sincerity and personal worth.

It is a pitiful story—this of the prodigal—when he began to be in want, no man gave unto him. The gay companions of the riotous days were willing to gorge themselves with the fat dinners their flush young friend bought for them, but when he was suffering from sheer hunger, they hadn't so much as a crumb to share with him. How unutterably foolish it is to cultivate such friendships!

Lord Jesus, teach us the character of true friendship. Help us to realize that Thy friendship is the most precious of all and that those who are in fellowship with Thee may have a beautiful friendship one with another. We pray in the name of our eternal Friend. Amen.

June 8. Disgrace

"And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine" (Luke 15:15).

When his money was spent, when his fun had come to an end, and his friends had failed him, the poor prodigal faced a critical situation.

He no doubt pawned every valuable he possessed, but that method could not last long. He tried begging, but no one would give him anything. He hunted for a job whereby he might earn a bare living. But hard times were on, and positions were hard to get. He no doubt went from business house to business house asking for work, but everywhere he was turned away. At first he tried to get some kind of position that would be agreeable to his tastes, but as the pinch of hunger became more painful, he tried other lines; yes, he got to the point where he was willing to do anything just so he could get something to eat. Not finding anything in town, he went into the country; begging a farmer to take him in, he was sent out to herd swine. Think of the disgrace—a son of a well-to-do Jew becoming a herder of the hated swine!

But disgrace is often the reward of sin and folly—and disgrace not only to oneself but also to parents and friends. What a pity it is that young people who have been reared in good homes, for whom parents have toiled and sacrificed, sometimes so wrongly conduct themselves that they bring shame upon their own people! Instead of joy they bring their parents pain and sorrow.

O God, if we get started on the wrong way, show us our folly before it is too late. Save us from bringing disgrace upon ourselves or our dear ones. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Third Week: IN THE FAR COUNTRY

June 9. The Husks

"And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat" (Luke 15:16).

It was bad enough for a Jewish boy of good family to become a swineherder, but he even had to share the food of the swine and try to still his hunger with "the husks that the swine did eat."

"The husks!" What a striking symbol of the remnants of a misspent life!

Life had looked rosy for a time. Youth had seemed to blossom out into a joyous existence. Every day had seemed to unfold new glories of color and form. But the plant was not rightly rooted. It failed to send its roots deep enough. It failed to draw up an adequate food supply. And so the flowers began to fade; there was no forming of fruit; at last it stood there withered—nothing but husks!

Oh, why will promising young people start out on careers like that? When every day might see powers developed, skills acquired, information stored up, weaknesses overcome, temptations resisted, victories won, progress made in the attainment of enduring values it is hard to see a young life frittered away with inane things and debasing practices that drag it down into the mire of sin and disgrace. Nothing but "husks!"

O God, who art the Author of life, show us the sacredness of Thy gift. Hold before us the matchless example of the fruitful life of Thy son. Help us to let the empty things go and lay earnest hold upon enduring values. Help us so to root ourselves in Thee that we shall flourish and bear the kind of fruit that brings satisfaction to ourselves, joy to our loved ones, and glory to Thee. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

Twenty-Third Week: IN THE FAR COUNTRY

June 10. Desperation

"I perish here with hunger" (Luke 15:17).

Things had gone from bad to worse with the young man. It was bad to have his money give out, to have his fun come to an end, and to have his friends go back on him. It was hard not to find an agreeable way of making a living; it was a disgrace to become a swineherd. But after trying in vain to satisfy his hunger with the husks that the swine did eat, he cried out in despair: "I perish."

What a fearful tax sin levies upon its devotees! It takes everything a man has—his money, his social position, his reputation, his character, the very content of his life; all the victim has left is a hopeless sense of desperation, and he cries out "I perish!"

Is such a master worth serving? Is it worth while to sell the soul for a brief period of fancied pleasure and gayety? Is this the end of life as you would wish it to be?

O friend, if you are tempted to go the prodigal's way, remember the prodigal's reward, and put such temptation from you as you would the most deadly poison. But do not try to fight the battle alone. You are not strong enough to win by your own strength. Link up your life in every possible way with Christ, who has all power in heaven and earth and who is abundantly able to keep you in the way of truth and rectitude.

Make use of all the aids God has given you for overcoming temptation—the Means of Grace, prayer, Christian fellowship, active service in the kingdom; then, by the grace of God, your life shall be blessed for triumphant and fruitful living.

Dear Lord Jesus, teach the young people to come to Thee for help in the hour of temptation. Fill their lives with ideals of high purpose and give them of Thy power to live lives worth while. We ask it in Thy own blessed name. Amen.

Twenty-Fourth Week: GOD'S CALL TO THE PRODIGAL

June 11. God Seeks Sinners

"And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner" (Luke 19:7).

In our meditations we have observed that the world has become a prodigal, that God in His great love has formed a plan for bringing the world back to Him, that Christ, in harmony with that plan, has completed the work of redemption, and that the Holy Spirit has come to apply the benefits of redemption to men.

But this redemption can be accomplished only by the Spirit's dealing with the individual person. There is no such thing as the regeneration of a group or society without the regeneration of the individual. All that the triune God has done for the world, He has done for the individual, and only in so far as the individual is reached, is God's plan of salvation successful.

The Lord's plan is, therefore, through human agencies to seek every individual person who is a stranger to Him, whether baptized and fallen away, or not baptized at all, in Christian or in heathen lands, and bring him back to the Father's house.

God yearns for the prodigal soul. Jesus summed up His whole mission in that one short statement: "The Son of man came to seek and save that which was lost."

"Yea, as I live, Jehovah saith,
I would not have the sinner's death,
Far rather 'tis My holy will,
That in his course he should stand still,
Repentant sinners I forgive,
Then let them hear, believe, and live."

Gracious, triune God, we thank Thee for Thy love to sinners and for Thy wondrous plan of saving men. Grant for Jesus' sake that we may be used by Thee in extending Thy call to lost men everywhere. Amen.

Twenty-Fourth Week: GOD'S CALL TO THE PRODIGAL

June 12. Conviction of Sin

"And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

The instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit for the seeking of sinners is the Word of God.

The first step is conviction of sin. For this purpose, He asks the sinner to look into the mirror of the law in order that he may see himself as he is. A young man came to Jesus once for advice as to how to obtain eternal life. He said he had kept the law from his childhood on. Jesus put his finger on the sore spot in the young man's life, saying: *"One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions"* (Mark 10:21-22).

We see from the young man's reaction to the requirement of Jesus, that he who thought he had kept the whole law had not begun to keep the First Commandment, which as Luther explains it, means that "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."

If anyone will go through the commandments one by one and sincerely test out his life by them—his words, deeds, thoughts, and desires—he will most assuredly be convinced that his morality does not measure up to God's holy standard. Certainly we must all join in Paul's conclusion, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

O God in heaven, Thou Holy One, we pray Thee to show us our sins. Grant that we may not in foolishness deceive ourselves, but let Thy Holy Spirit shine into our hearts and reveal the hidden things that are displeasing to Thee. Help us to see our great need of salvation in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Twenty-Fourth Week: GOD'S CALL TO THE PRODIGAL

June 13. God's Judgment on Sin

Sin is a very, very serious matter. The Lord Himself pronounced judgment upon the disobedience of our first parents: *"And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Gen. 2:16-17).

This judgment of death has become universal. *"Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men for that all sinned"* (Rom. 5:12). And again: *"For the wages of sin is death"* (Rom. 6:23). Still further Paul says: *"Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them"* (Gal. 3:10). There is need that this clear truth of God's judgment on sin be emphasized today. Men speak of sin as if it were no serious matter. Yes, it is even joked about or laughed at.

By others, sin is regarded as mere imperfection, as the remnant of animal traits which men have not yet sloughed off in an upward, evolutionary movement. It is not looked upon as anything for which man is responsible.

With such views of sin it is not surprising that it is regarded lightly. But when we know that sin is transgression of God's holy law, that God's hot wrath is directed against it, and that the condemnation of death rests upon it, we shall not laugh about sin.

O Thou righteous and holy God, teach us the enormity of sin in Thy holy eyes. Help us to realize that by sin we bring the judgment of death upon us. Plant within us a constant desire to get rid of sin and to acquire a hunger and thirst after righteousness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Fourth Week: GOD'S CALL TO THE PRODIGAL

June 14. The Message of Grace

The work of the Holy Spirit does not stop with conviction of sin and God's judgment upon it. That in itself can produce nothing but despair. The Spirit's purpose is to bring men to a point where they realize their sinful and lost condition in order that in their desperate need they may reach out for salvation as a drowning man cries for help.

Then the Holy Spirit comes with the blessed gospel of forgiveness through Christ Jesus. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31). And oh, how sweet is this message to the convicted sinner: *"The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7).

The invitation to share in the grace of God in Christ Jesus runs all through the Bible. God is evidently very eager that these wondrous, good tidings should be proclaimed to repentant sinners. Meditate on these passages: *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18). *"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matt. 11:28).

On the basis of such blessed promises of God the poet may sing:

> "Come to Calvary's holy mountain,
> Sinners, ruined by the fall;
> Here a pure and healing fountain
> Flows to you, to me, to all;
> In a full perpetual tide,
> Opened when our Savior died."

Blessed Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for Thy gracious invitation. Help us to flee to Thee for forgiveness and refuge. Receive us and cleanse us from sin, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Twenty-Fourth Week: GOD'S CALL TO THE PRODIGAL

June 15. Calling Through Blessings

The Holy Spirit has a hard time of it often to get people to listen to His calling voice. Men are so absorbed in their daily work, making money, indulging in amusements, or what not that their ears are deaf to spiritual voices. So the Spirit must use various expedients to awaken the soul to a realization of its condition.

Sometimes the Lord overwhelms a person with blessings to such an extent that he begins to think and wonder; and there is hope for a man when he stops to think. A little thought will convince any man of the wonderful gifts he receives every day, and such convictions will result in the turning of the thoughts to God in gratitude for all his loving kindness. It must have been such an experience that prompted David to exclaim:

> *"Bless Jehovah, O my soul;*
> *And all that is within me, bless his holy name.*
> *Bless Jehovah, O my soul,*
> *And forget not all his benefits"* (Ps. 103:1-2).

It is a good thing when blessings work that way. Sometimes it seems as if the very opposite is the effect. When people prosper, they often become so satisfied with themselves and their conditions that they sink down into materialism and forget all about God.

Is not this a shameful abuse of God's goodness? The very blessings that should bind their hearts to God in gratitude become the instruments for drawing them away from Him!

Let us ask ourselves, friends: How have we responded to the blessings of God? Have they brought us nearer to or farther away from Him?

O God of wondrous goodness, soften our hearts by the remembrance of Thy many blessings. Make our hearts tender with a sense of deep gratitude to Thee. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Twenty-Fourth Week: GOD'S CALL TO THE PRODIGAL

June 16. Calling Through Affliction

"And when he was in distress, he besought Jehovah his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers" (2 Chron. 33:12).

Sometimes in order to reach the sinner's heart the Spirit must make use of adversities. The loss of money, goods, position, health, or loved ones, may be necessary to make the sinner stop and think.

Adversities in themselves are not good things. They bring pain, sorrow, and anguish. Sometimes, too, they result in a hardening of the heart toward God to such an extent that men will turn away from Him altogether.

But in many cases misfortune serves to humble a man, to strike down his pride, and bring him upon his knees before God. As long as everything goes well, people are prone to be confident in their own powers of mind or body and not to be greatly conscious of a need of God. But when things go against them, their undue self confidence is shaken and they begin to look away from themselves to a higher power. Or their prosperity may have made them simply thoughtless. Some calamity may serve as an alarm signal to wake them up, make them look about and take an inventory of the things that are filling their lives. They may thus be brought to realize that they have sadly neglected the higher interests of their souls.

Dear Lord, Thou art wise in Thy dealings with men. May all the experiences that come to us in life work out for our spiritual good. May they all bring us closer to Thee, our blessed Savior. If afflictions come, may they serve to loosen the hold of material things upon us and give us a more sincere yearning for a closer walk with Thee. Hear our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twenty-Fourth Week: GOD'S CALL TO THE PRODIGAL

June 17. Calling Through the Example of Others

Still another method is often used by the Spirit to make men listen—the observation of the lives of other people.

Sometimes it is in the way of warning—a sinful life resulting in unhappiness, failure, disgrace, suicide or other horrible death. Many a thoughtless sinner has been arrested in his course by such experiences.

Again the example may be one that gives a desire for imitation. Many a person has said, "I wish I could be a Christian like so-and-so." Someone has spoken of a fifth gospel, "the gospel according to you"; this gospel is read far more than the other four. A radiant Christianity is often more productive in soul winning than much preaching or argument. This gives Christians a heavy responsibility as well as a rare privilege.

Paul sensed this responsibility so keenly that he was willing to forgo many things if thereby he could be helpful to others.

"Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble" (1 Cor. 8:13).

Oh, if Christians were dominated by love for their fellowmen and by a passion for souls such as that! How they would guard their every step; how they would strive to let their every word and act reflect a happy, wholesome, captivating Christianity that would draw other souls to Christ with irresistible power! Is it not worth while to live such lives if some precious soul can be won for Christ by our example?

Dear Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for the high privilege of witnessing for Thee by our lives. Help us to live lives so thoroughly in harmony with Thy principles that men seeing us shall desire the same fellowship with Thee. In Thy own name we pray. Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Week: THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

June 18. The Awakening

The work of the Holy Spirit in calling men is strikingly illustrated in the case of the prodigal son, in Jesus' parable. When he had been reduced to a state of dire distress by the adversities which his own foolishness and sin had brought upon him, the record says: *"But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger!"* (Luke 15:17).

The young man *woke* up. That was a great day for him. The awakening itself was not pleasant, for he realized then what a fool he had been and into what sort of a shameful situation he had brought himself. But it was a great day nevertheless, for it marked the turning point in his life. Hitherto he had been going swiftly down the slope of his own inclinations. But now he stopped, looked about, and began to think. There is hope for even a reckless sinner when he comes to himself and begins to think.

The trouble with many unfortunate people is that they do not stop to think. They may not be particularly bad or perverted, but in their thoughtlessness they plunge on from one indulgence, or escapade, to another until they have blackened their souls with sin and brought shame and disgrace upon themselves and their loved ones.

As Christians who love such deluded folks, we should cry out to them a sharp warning, so that perchance they may "stop, look, and listen."

Dear Savior, Jesus Christ, we thank Thee that Thou dost love every straying soul and dost send out Thy loving calls to sinners to return to Thee. Grant that many a wretched wanderer may hear Thy voice and awaken to a realization of his sad estate before it is too late. We ask it in Thy own name. Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Week: THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

June 19. Memories

"But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger!" (Luke 15:17).

When the prodigal came to himself, he began to think of his home. Perhaps he had forgotten all about it during his gala-day experiences. But now in his disgrace and desperation his thoughts go back to his father's house. He thinks of how good father and mother have always been, how tenderly they cared for him, how anxiously they watched over him when he was ill. He thinks of the many, happy childhood days in the home. He thinks of the abundance of good things to eat and the comforts of the home. And now the strictness of his father and mother takes the form of the sincerest kindness. Oh, could he but hear again his father's prayers at the family altar!

It is good when the sinner comes to himself, begins to think, and lets his memories go back to home—and Father. Our earthly fathers and mothers have loved us with a great love and done many things for us, but these things cannot compare with the love and care of our heavenly Father. When the sinner begins to think of that, there is hope for him, even in the midst of the deepest disgrace.

Fortunate is every man and woman who carries along into life memories of a happy, Christian home. However far men may stray into a far country, those memories will go with them and draw them back. The memories of a good home have constituted the point of contact in the reclamation of many a wayward son and daughter.

O God, we thank Thee for Christian homes. Wilt Thou help the fathers and the mothers to surround their children with an atmosphere of such cons crated kindness and wholesomeness that the memories of home will always constitute a precious treasure in the lives of every child. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Week: THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

June 20. Penitence

Something happened to the prodigal son. He left his father's house in a spirit of bold independence, determined to go out into the world to seek a bigger life, fully confident of his own ability and wisdom. And now we hear him say: *"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants"* (Luke 15:18-19).

He is conscious of several things. First, that he has sinned; and it is significant that he puts Heaven first. It reminds us of David's confession: *"Against thee, thee only have I sinned"* (Ps. 51:4). That is the terribleness of sin, that it is committed against a loving and holy God.

But the prodigal is also conscious of wrongs to his father. And because of this sin against heaven and his good father he feels utterly humble: "I am no longer worthy to be called thy son." He sees what a blunder he has made of his life. There is no longer any abounding confidence in his own ability and wisdom. He wishes now that he had paid a little more attention to his father's advice and warnings. It would have saved him much unhappiness, sorrow, and shame and kept much of his life from being wasted.

The young man became truly penitent.

It was a wretched experience, but it was a necessary and a fruitful one; for it produced in him a profound longing for his father's house.

It is good and necessary for all of us every day to experience a truly repentant spirit. May each of us make this our prayer:

> "Before Thee, God, who knowest all,
> With grief and shame I prostrate fall;
> I see my sins against Thee, Lord,
> The sins of thought, of deed, and word,
> They press me sore, I cry to Thee:
> O God, be merciful to me!"

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Week: THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

June 21. The Decision

The Spirit has done His work with the prodigal. He stands convicted of sin and is experiencing the consequences of his guilt. He is sorry that he has done wrong to God and his father, and he longs to get back into the old fellowship. Under the pressure of these influences he forms a great decision: *"I will arise and go to my father"* (Luke 15:18). And he not only forms the decision in his mind, but he carries it out in action. Happy day for the young man!

Oh, how many prodigals there are who have heard the Lord's call to leave their life in sin. They have even been convicted of sin and felt a degree of sorrow for it—yes, they may even have had an impulse to arise and go back to the father's house, but that's as far as they have got. Thousands have even formed the definite resolution to go back, but they have never got started out on the way that leads to life. Postponement is one of the Devil's chief means of keeping slaves in his service. "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

Friend, if you are not a Christian today, the chances of your ever becoming one are growing smaller and smaller with every day that passes. Why not settle the matter right now? Why not surrender and give your heart to God in this moment?

> "Then cry: 'Lord Jesus, help Thou me,
> This very day I come to Thee!
> Oh, give me peace, and from this hour
> Deliver me from Satan's power;
> That henceforth and eternally,
> Thyself my all in all may be!' "

God give you grace to pray that prayer from the heart, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Week: THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

June 22. Back to the Father's House

"And he arose, and came to his father, But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

The prodigal starts for home. Already in the greatness of joy that has followed this decision and action he has forgotten his hunger and his rags. All is now expectation. He moves along hurriedly. He cannot get home any too soon.

He wonders what the folks will say. At times he has doubts, perhaps, as to whether or not they will receive him; but these doubts are swept away by the thoughts of father's and mother's love. He wonders how father will look, and whether his mother has grown older. A cruel pain shoots through his heart at the thought that his parents may have grown old and grey before their time because of his misconduct. And suddenly he is almost paralyzed by the thought that his parents may be dead and his former home pervaded by a great emptiness.

But he hopes for the best and as he approaches nearer and nearer, the sense of joyous expectancy at the thought of coming home fills his soul almost to the exclusion of everything else.

Friend, if you have gone away from your heavenly Father's house, wouldn't it be wonderful to get back again? To know again that you are a child of God and have the privilege of walking with your heavenly Father in a fellowship of love and understanding?

O Holy Spirit, Thou who dost so earnestly plead with our souls, kindle in the hearts of straying sons and daughters a great longing to get back to the Father's house. Let the thought of loving fellowship with God break all the bonds that hold them back. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Week: THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

June 23. The Reception

"But while he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

Where in the whole range of the world's literature can you find a more beautiful picture of a father's love? Clearly he had been waiting and looking for his son's return. It was lonely in the house after the boy had gone. Ever since he went away the father no doubt had been casting glances at times along that road leading to the far country hoping that he might some day see his son coming back.

And when on that eventful day he sees him approach, ragged and dirty, there is not a shadow of resentment in his heart, but an overwhelming sense of compassion. The old man sets out on a run down the road to meet his son. His arms are wide open, and soon he holds his boy tightly in his embrace.

Oh, how many other fathers and mothers have waited for the home-coming of wayward boys and girls! Oh, if the straying children only knew how their parents long for them and what a hearty welcome awaits them if they would but return! There would be no scolding, no questioning; just an open embrace of love, if they would but come back.

All father and mother love is but a weak picture of that incomprehensible love which goes out from our heavenly Father to His children on earth. He loves them always, even when they go away from Him into sin. His love follows them and assures them of a gracious welcome if they turn about from their ways of sin and foolishness and return to Him.

"As the shepherd seeks to find
His lost sheep that from him strayeth
So hath Christ each soul in mind,
And for its salvation prayeth;
Fain He'd have each wanderer live:
Jesus sinners doth receive."

Gracious Father, Thy love is greater than I can understand. Wilt Thou in Thy tender love continue to seek every wandering soul. Help me that I may never stray from Thy fellowship of love. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Week: THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN

June 24. A Festival of Joy

The prodigal son tried to stammer forth to his father his confession of wrong-doing but the father seemingly was so glad just to have his boy back again that he made no reply to the confession. Instead he got busy giving orders to his servants:

"Bring forth quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat, and make merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:22-24).

The son might have spared himself his worries about his father's attitude. Not only was he welcome back. Nothing was too good for him, the best robe was to be his, a sonship ring on his hand in place of the one he no doubt had pawned in the far country, shoes on his feet, and a great festive dinner with the fatted calf served in honor of the son's return!

"Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).

A festival of joy in heaven when a repentant sinner comes back to God and asks to be forgiven! The angel choruses set a-singing for every soul that is saved! How wonderful! How precious must a soul be! And what scenes in heaven every hour of the day as reports come of souls saved. Reports from America, from China, from India, from Africa, from every corner of the earth! Oh, how the Savior must feel rewarded for His cruel pains and anguish on earth!

> "Let every kindred, every tribe,
> On this terrestrial ball,
> To Him all majesty ascribe,
> And crown Him Lord of all!"

Lord, give us, for Jesus' sake, a share in that triumph song. Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Week: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

June 25. The Problem

"Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

When a convicted sinner in repentance turns back to God, he is confronted with the very serious question as to whether or not God really will forgive him his sins and receive him back into a saving fellowship.

Satan comes in his subtle way and suggests to the sinner: "You are too great a sinner to be forgiven." Or, "You must try to improve yourself a little before you come and ask for forgiveness. It won't do to come in your present sinful condition." Or, "You are not sorry enough for your sins. You are not as repentant as you should be." In such ways the Devil tries to discourage the sinner from trusting in God for the full forgiveness of all his sins.

And even if the penitent has trusted in God to begin with, when he discovers that temptation is still present with him and that he even yields to it at times, the Devil comes promptly and tells him: "Oh, you are no Christian. See how you have gone and sinned again. You have been fooling yourself that you are a Christian."

What experienced Christian has not heard these voices and been sorely troubled as to whether or not he really is a child of God!

Certainly the problem is real: Let us this week sincerely and prayerfully examine into this matter and try to come to clearness in this all-important question as to how we stand with God.

Merciful Father in heaven, we pray Thee to let the light of Thy word shine into the hearts of repentant sinners and struggling Christian men and women in order that they may know the truth about themselves and Thy wondrous forgiving love. We ask it for Christ's sake. Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Week: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

June 26. Our Utter Helplessness

In a consideration of the problem of Christian assurance the first truth to be driven home is this that no man can save himself. The uniform witness of Scripture testifies to this truth.

We cannot of ourselves even understand the way of salvation. *"Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged"* (1 Cor. 2:14). We are entirely dependent upon the Spirit of God for illumination and guidance. Furthermore, we are by nature fundamentally opposed to God. We are in revolt against Him. *"Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be"* (Rom. 8:7). By reason of this corruption and perversion of our nature by sin we absolutely cannot save ourselves. We cannot make ourselves the children of God.

It humiliates us to admit our impotence. Furthermore much of present day thought would confuse us. We hear much of the exaltation of unregenerate human nature, of salvation by character, of salvation through service, that flatters our own pride.

But whether we like it or not, the clear teaching of God is that men in their natural condition are *"dead in trespasses and sins"* (Eph. 2:1).

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Rom. 3:10).

If left to ourselves, therefore, our condition is utterly hopeless.

O righteous God, in order that Thou mayest be able to save us, wilt Thou strike down our pride and convince us of our utter impotence to establish any righteousness satisfactory in Thy holy eyes. Thou wilt do this in Thy loving kindness to us in Christ. Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Week: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

June 27. The Ground of Our Salvation

Since we cannot save ourselves, we must look elsewhere for a Savior. And God be praised, there is a wondrous Savior. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).

Here is something substantial to build upon—not our own corrupt natures, not our own thoughts, emotions, or aspirations, but Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, is the sinner's only hope; and He is entirely adequate to our needs. We were under condemnation because of sin, but Jesus took our guilt upon Himself, suffered and died in our stead. *"But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom. 5:8).

Now here is a truth to be kept steadily in mind. The redemptive work of Christ was completed some nineteen hundred years ago. Christianity is founded upon this great historical fact.

When Christ cried on the cross: "It is finished," and rose victorious on Easter morning, absolutely everything was done that was necessary to be done in order to prepare the ground of our salvation. All things were then ready, and the message of grace in Christ Jesus went out to sinful men everywhere.

Let us once and for all get this truth firmly established in our consciousness that salvation is a gift of God through Christ Jesus and not the result of any effort that we can put forth.

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee;
Let the water and the blood,
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."

Precious Savior, we thank Thee for this wondrous truth. Help us to build on Thee and Thee alone. Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Week: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

June 28. Trusting in Jesus

We know that Christ died for all people, but we know also that there are many who are not saved.

How is this?

The reasons that many people are not saved are either that they do not know about the salvation that has been prepared for them or that they will not accept it when it is offered to them. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life are free gifts of God, but they are not forced upon any one. By the power of the Holy Spirit we can accept the offered gift, but by reason of our own perverted wills we can also reject it.

How then do we accept salvation? We do this by faith. But what is faith? Faith is simply the hand extended to receive the gift. That is its essence.

Faith is not an exercise of the soul by which in any sense we earn salvation; it is rather an attitude of willingness to receive as a free gift the forgiveness of sins which Jesus bought for us by the shedding of His life blood. By my thus receiving the gift of forgiveness of sins, Jesus becomes for me my personal Savior, and I become a partaker in that salvation which He has prepared for all men.

Faith has been described also as looking to Jesus. This idea is beautifully set forth in that precious passage in John's gospel: *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life"* (John 3:14-15).

"My Faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine;
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
Oh, let me from this day
Be wholly Thine."

Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Week: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

June 29. Christ Our Righteousness

To have the forgiveness of sins is to be free from the guilt and punishment of sin. But in order to be acceptable in the sight of God we must possess a positive righteousness. Is this something that we can get up of ourselves? No, this too is a free gift of God through Christ. By His perfect obedience and His absolutely holy life, Jesus won for us a perfect righteousness. And when in penitence we come to God in trusting faith, He not only gives us a full forgiveness, because Jesus has paid our penalty, but He also assigns to us Christ's righteousness, so that, covered with it, as by a robe, we stand in the sight of God holy as if we possessed a righteousness of our own.

"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

Isn't it wonderful!

Suppose there is a criminal who has been condemned to die for a certain crime. And then suppose that the governor of the state not only pardons him but also adopts the pardoned criminal as his own son! That is but a weak picture of what our heavenly Father does to a forgiven sinner.

What a wonderful God we have! And how we ought to trust Him and love Him!

"Not the labors of my hands
Can fulfill Thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin would not atone;
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

O glorious Savior, we cannot thank Thee enough for Thy wondrous salvation. But help us to receive it gladly as Thy free gift to be our precious possession through all eternity. We pray in Thy name. Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Week: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

June 30. Grace Alone

The grace of God in Christ Jesus seems almost too good to be true. And there are a great many people who seem utterly unable to believe it and accept it. They are so under the influence of a theory of works-righteousness that they seemingly can't get hold of the idea that salvation is by grace alone. They say: "Surely I must do something myself. Surely I must try to quit sinning and start to do right before I can become a Christian." No, friend, that is not the right order. You are putting the cart before the horse. All the good works in the world will not make you a Christian. You become a Christian by accepting a gift. Then you will receive a new desire and a new power to do God-pleasing works. But salvation comes first, and salvation is a free gift of God's grace.

"But now apart from the law a righteousness of God hath been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe" (Rom. 3:21-22). *"So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life"* (Rom. 5:18).

Friend, get and keep this great truth clearly before you. Christ worked out a complete salvation for you, nineteen hundred years ago. The gift is waiting for you to receive it, without money and without price.

Let this be your confession:

> "Nothing in my hand I bring;
> Simply to Thy cross I cling;
> Naked, come to Thee for dress;
> Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
> Foul, I to the fountain fly;
> Wash me, Savior, or I die."

Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Week: CHRISTIAN ASSURANCE

July 1. God Keeps His Promises

If you come to God in penitence and faith, He will most assuredly receive you, grant you a full pardon, and take you into His fellowship again.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:8-9).

This passage bases assurance of forgiveness on two qualities of God: His faithfulness and His justice. Because of His faithfulness, God will keep His many promises of mercy to the repentant sinner, and because of His justice, He will not require a payment twice. Jesus has paid once, and that is sufficient. Through Him you are freed from your debt.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

So let this be your prayer:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am; Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Week: SANCTIFICATION

July 2. A Holy Life

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3).

There have been those in the history of the church who have abused the doctrine of free grace by teaching that it is not a serious matter if we as Christians commit sins, for the grace of God is so abundant that all we need to do is to go to God and ask forgiveness. This is . shameful perversion of God's truth. The apostle Paul condemns this view very sharply: *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace"* (Rom. 6:1-2 and 12-14).

The Christian life should be a holy life. God expects it of us. *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification"* (1 Thess. 4:3). This should settle the matter for the Christian. The spirit of obedience to God's holy will is of the very essence of Christianity.

Furthermore, the true Christian will want to live a life in harmony with the law of God. Gratitude and love to Jesus will make the Christian desire to please Jesus and not to crucify Him afresh.

"Loving Jesus! Thou my treasure,
Whose love to man no thought can measure
Conform me to Thine image bright;
Send Thy Spirit, grace bestowing,
That I, in every virtue growing,
May ripen for the realms of light;
Oh, draw me after Thee,
Forever Thine to be,
Loving Savior!
Thou givest rest to souls distressed,
And all who learn of Thee are blest."

Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Week: SANCTIFICATION

July 3. Christ Our Ideal

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

We have here a pattern for holy living. Almost every person has some sort of ideal—some standard of excellence—which he sets up as the criterion for his conduct and life. We often think it worth while to emulate a certain man or woman, a parent, a pastor, a teacher, a patriot, a person of distinguished achievement. We all have our heroes. And that is well. But we have missed the greatest inspiration unless we have tried to be like Christ. The process of sanctification may well be spoken of as patterning our lives more and more according to His noble spirit and life. As His followers we should strive to become more and more Christ-like in wisdom, obedience, faith, love, spirit of service, power in the presence of temptation, and in all those other qualities that grace the Christian character.

Hawthorne tells of a man who so long looked up in admiration to the "Great Stone Face" that he gradually took on a striking likeness to the stone figure.

We have a far more wonderful "Face" to contemplate; and by permitting it to be much within the range of our vision we shall more and more be made over in harmony with it. *"But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit"* (2 Cor. 3:18).

"Plant Thyself in me;
I will learn of Thee,
To be holy, meek, and tender,
Wrath and pride and self surrender:
Nothing shouldst Thou see
But Thyself in me."

Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Week: SANCTIFICATION

Special Meditation for Independence Day on Page 367

July 4. The Putting Away of the Old

"Put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit" (Eph. 4:22).

The process of sanctification is pictured in the Bible in terms of the figure of the old man and the new man; the old man representing the natural tendency to sin, and the new man the new-born power for holiness.

Even though a person has become a Christian, there clings to him the old inclination to evil. But this tendency is to be worked against, put off, made to die. That is, as Christians we are to abstain from doing the things we know to be wrong. Here is a list of things to put off, as Paul gives it in his letter to the Colossians: *"Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings"* (Col. 3:5-9).

Certainly this is not an attractive list. But every honest Christian recognizes the roots of these ugly sins in himself and longs to be rid of them. He has an earnest yearning to conquer, one after the other, the base desires, inclinations, or weaknesses that hold him down to life on the lower levels.

"O enter, let me know Thee,
And feel Thy power within,
The power that breaks our fetters,
And rescues us from sin.
Oh, wash and cleanse Thou me,
That I may serve Thee truly,
To render honor duly
With perfect heart to Thee."

O Lord, we pray Thee for strength to win in Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Week: SANCTIFICATION

July 5. The Growing of the New

"Put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Eph. 4:24).

The other side of sanctification is the putting on of the new man. That is, as Christians we are to exercise ourselves in doing what we know to be right. The putting off of the old man is the negative side; the putting on of the new man is the positive. And there is no more efficient way of putting off the old than by putting on the new. The best way to keep from doing wrong is to do the right. The oak leaves often cling to the trees all winter and defy the heavy blasts that blow, but when the young leaves come in the spring, the old drop off of themselves.

Here is Paul's list of qualities to put on: *"Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness"* (Col. 3:12-14).

What a challenging ideal! Who would not wish to develop along such lines as these—holiness, meekness, kindliness, wisdom, joy? These are the qualities that make life beautiful and strong.

"Holy Jesus! Fountain streaming
Of holiness and grace redeeming,
As clear as crystal, pure and free;
Cherubim in robes of whiteness
And seraphim in all their brightness
Are darkness when compared with Thee;
Be Thou my pattern bright,
My glory and delight,
Holy Savior!
Oh, teach Thou me, that I may be
All pure and holy, like to Thee."

Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Week: SANCTIFICATION

July 6. The Conflict

The process of sanctification involves a real struggle. The Devil is not willing to give up his grip on us even though we have become Christians. He continues to work, through our old sinful natures, against the power of God in our lives.

A striking picture of this conflict is painted for us by St. Paul: *"For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I practise. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. I find then the law, that, to me who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members"* (Rom. 7:18-23).

It is no easy thing to be a Christian—to live a consistent, victorious life. It calls for far more strength than we possess in ourselves. It summons us to link up our lives with Him who has all power in heaven and in earth, and with that reinforcement to take up the fight in dead earnest, with a high determination to win.

> "Fight the good fight with all thy might,
> Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right;
> Lay hold on life, and it shall be
> Thy joy and crown eternally."

Gracious and mighty God, help me to realize that to live for Thee means conflict with sin. Give me, O Lord, richly of Thy sustaining strength. Help me to live a life of victorious power, to the glory of Thy name. Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Week: SANCTIFICATION

July 7. The Daily Renewal

"Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).

The process of sanctification is sometimes spoken of as the daily renewal, or the daily conversion. There must be a constant turning away from sin and a turning toward God. Some people seem to think they can live a spiritual life on the thought that they once experienced a conversion. This, as a sainted man of God once said, would be like trying to live the physical life on the memory of a good meal that we once had.

We need to be renewed daily, to form a high resolve to abstain from sin and fight its power in our lives; on the other hand, to make use of every opportunity in daily life, in our work and our play, to grow in Christian virtues, to make happy the people about us.

A woman who had recently become an earnest Christian visited a worldly sister, at a distance, whom she had not met for years. When she returned she said, "I have been much cheered by my visit. Although my sister is worldly, she said to me, 'I do not know what has happened to you, but you are a great deal easier to live with than you used to be.'"

Surely, that was a fine testimony to progress in sanctification.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, we thank Thee because Thou hast set before us Thy beautiful life as an inspiration to continued spiritual growth. Help us each day to look at Thee and to put out of our lives everything that is not pleasing in Thy sight. Make us strong, cheerful, kind, considerate, and attractive in our Christianity. Help us to grow more and more like Thee. Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Week: SANCTIFICATION

July 8. A Life-Long Warfare

We never get through with the struggle between the flesh and the spirit as long as our life on earth lasts. We never become perfectly holy. John was writing to Christians when he said: *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1:8).

Christ included the petition for forgiveness in the prayer He taught His believing disciples. It is to be noted, however, that there is a vast difference between the sinning of the children of God and that of the children of the world. The latter sin knowingly and willingly and often find pleasure in their sin. But Christians never sin willingly, are always deeply grieved when they realize that they have sinned, and go to God to ask for forgiveness.

While we in life never become entirely free from sin or its power, we can become more and more so. It is one of the joys of the Christian life, that we become increasingly filled with the Spirit and the power of God, and progressively more immune to the attacks of temptation.

The Arabs have a belief that when a person wins over an opponent in a contest, the winner absorbs the strength of the conquered foe. Fanciful, we say. And yet in the spiritual realm something very much like that happens. We grow stronger by every victory we win over our own weaknesses or sinful inclinations, or over the enemies of our soul that beset us from without.

Blessed Jesus, sanctify us more and more. Give us increasing power over sin and enlarged strength for holiness. Let us walk in such close fellowship with Thee that we shall become more and more like Thee in hatred of sin and in love of holiness. Make us victorious in Thee. Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Week: CONSECRATION

July 9. Whole-Heartedness

There are differences among Christians. There are some who barely seem to exist spiritually, while others are buoyant, radiant, and powerful. In between there are various degrees. What makes the difference? In a sense, we may say, it is due to a difference in consecration—the extent to which men have dedicated themselves to God, that is, have given Him the control of their lives. Now, there is no doubt about what God wants. He says:

"My son, give me thy heart;
And let thine eyes delight in my ways" (Prov. 23:26).

And again: *"And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself"* (Luke 10:27). God is not satisfied with anything less. "He would be Lord of all, or Lord not at all."

During the world war a lawyer serving on a draft board had occasion to help a young immigrant man fill out his questionnaire. The lawyer explained that as an alien he was entitled to claim exemption. The young man straightened himself, and with a high look replied: "When I came to America, I came all. If America needs Karl Klausen, Karl Klausen is ready!"

Shall we take a less surrendered attitude to God? Shall we not rather say that we have "come all" to serve the Lord?

"Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Striving to please Him in all that I do,
Yielding allegiance, gladhearted and free—
This is the pathway of blessing for me.
Living for Jesus who died in my place,
Bearing on Calvary my sin and disgrace,
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading and give Him my all."

Yes, dear Jesus, I give Thee my all. Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Week: CONSECRATION

July 10. A Living Sacrifice

In Old Testament times it was customary to make sacrifices of lambs, rams, oxen, and other animals. The rites required the slaying of the animals for this purpose.

In his appeal for Christian consecration, Paul calls for a living sacrifice. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service"* (Rom. 12:1).

His meaning is that our lives, with all that we possess of abilities, talents, and training, are to be placed upon the altar of service to God and our fellowmen. We are to be wholly dedicated.

We admire the zeal of those who are willing in a heroic mood to die for their friends or for their convictions, but it is no less a mark of heroism to live and work unselfishly for truth, for God, and for humanity.

There is a story of a poor Indian to whom the collection basket was passed. He said, "Put it down a little lower." When it was lowered, he said, "Still lower," until it was put on the floor. Then he stepped into it. He wanted to give himself. That was his way of yielding himself up. He would be all for Christ.

"Thy life was given for me,
Thy precious blood was shed;
That I might ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead.
Thy life was given for me:
What have I given for Thee?

O let my life be given,
My years for Thee be spent,
World-fetters all be riven,
And joy and suffering blent!
Thou gavest Thyself for me;
I give myself for Thee."

Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Week: CONSECRATION

July 11. The Divided Life—Unhappy

Some people try to live a divided life. They say they are Christians, but do not want to be different from the world. They say they want to do God's will, but they are not willing to subject their own wills to His. They say they love God, but they will not let go of their love of the world. They say they want to serve, but they do not forget self. Such people are not happy. There is no real satisfaction in their lives. They cannot give themselves over wholly into the service of sin, but neither will they dedicate themselves wholly to God. The result is that they have no sure foundation in their lives, no poise, no calm peace. They are half hearted when they might be whole-hearted; they are indifferent when they might be enthusiastic; they are cold when they might be warm with zeal for God's great program in the world. Truly, Jesus knew of what He was speaking when He said: *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"* (Matt. 6:24).

Faraday, the great chemist, learned a lesson in boyhood by a very childish experience. As a little lad, earning his bread by selling newspapers in the street, he was waiting outside the office of an Edinburgh paper for the morning issue, and thrust his head and arms through the railings of the iron gate. He began to speculate on which side of the railings he was. "My head and hands are on one side," he said to himself, "and my heart and body are on the other." The gate was opened hastily before he could disengage himself, and the wrench he received taught him, as he said in after life, that all true work requires head and heart and hands to be on the same side.

"Thine for ever! God of love,
Hear us from Thy throne above;
Thine for ever may we be,
Here and in eternity."

Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Week: CONSECRATION

July 12. The Divided Life—Powerless

Another defect of the divided life is its lack of power. People who are trying to serve two masters find themselves constantly in a losing fight with temptation. When a friend comes along and invites them to take part in something they know to be wrong, they haven't the power to say no. They do not dare to be different; they are afraid that they might be laughed at and talked about. And so, in spite of the fact that it gives them a bad conscience, they go along, and afterwards are thoroughly ashamed of themselves, and heartily despised besides, by the very people in whose eyes they are trying so hard to get a recognized standing.

If they are present where unclean conversation is going on, or where holy things are profaned, they haven't the courage to speak up and express their disapproval. They do not dare to let their light shine.

In a group of men where the great English, Christian statesman Gladstone was present, a man was on the point of telling a story of doubtful quality, but before beginning he looked about and said: "I see that there are no ladies present." Immediately Gladstone spoke up: "I would remind the speaker that there are gentlemen present." The story was not told.

How vibrant with Christian power and enthusiasm is the consecrated life! Paul has given us a glimpse of its refreshing assurance of ultimate triumph: *"For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:19-21).

Lord Jesus Christ, we pray Thee to take away our double-mindedness and to give us instead the conquering energy which Thy strength can supply. Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Week: CONSECRATION

July 13. A Great Need

Undoubtedly the greatest need of the church today is a more whole-hearted consecration of its members.

In periods of great spiritual movements, such as the Apostolic age and the Reformation, the church has been marked by a wideawakeness and zeal on the part of its members that under the hand of God has pushed forward mightily the work of His kingdom. At other times there has been a settling back into a paralyzing indifference and apathy. How the church may be kept steadily awake to its God-given and world-saving mission is a problem ever confronting the zealous Christian. The essential element in the solution is a more thoroughgoing consecration; a more whole-hearted dedication of ourselves and everything that we possess to the furtherance of God's program; the putting aside of self-will and self-love and the losing of ourselves in devotion to the soul-winning and soul-upbuilding work to which Christ has called us.

Jesus has set us the ideal at the well in Samaria after His saving interview with the Samaritan woman.

"In the meanwhile the disciples prayed him, saying, Rabbi, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not. The disciples therefore said one to another, Hath any man brought him aught to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest" (John 4:31-35).

Great hearted Jesus, give us something of Thy spirit of consecration. Give us some of Thy hunger for saving souls. Make us fit instruments for the outworking of Thy plans for the world. In Thy own name we ask it. Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Week: CONSECRATION

July 14. What It Would Mean

The opening chapters of the Book of Acts reveal a wonderfully refreshing picture of the spiritual life of the early Christians: *"And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved"* (Acts 2:46-47). *"And with great power gave the Apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all"* (Acts 4:33). *"And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith"* (Acts 6:7).

What a difference it would make if Christians were always thoroughly consecrated! How the work of the church would move forward by leaps and bounds! We would then be more earnest and persistent in prayer; we would be deeply concerned about the neighbor next door who is a stranger to the household of God; we would be zealous for Christian education and for the care of the sick and unfortunate; the work of God would not need to lag for lack of funds; elaborate organizations and desperate effort would not be needed to raise the annual budget; there would flow out to the foreign mission fields a stream of love in terms of men and means that would soon transform the world. We would be more happy, more satisfied, more radiant, more persuasive, more powerful, more efficient in our Christianity. Oh, what a difference it would make in our lives, our homes, our churches, and in the world!

"Lord of the living harvest,
That whitens o'er the plain,
Where angels soon shall gather
Their sheaves of golden grain,
Accept these hands to labor,
These hearts to trust and love,
And deign with them to hasten
Thy kingdom from above."

Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Week: CONSECRATION

July 15. A Prayer

In his farewell address to the elders of the Ephesian church Paul testified to his unconditional consecration in these words: *"But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24).

Dear friend, do you not feel that it would be a glorious thing to be wholly dedicated to God; to have that perfect assurance that you belong to Him, that all you are and all you have are in the Lord's hands to direct and to use? If you do, then put your heart and soul into this prayer and give God absolute control of your life.

"I lift my heart to Thee, Savior divine,
For Thou art all to me, and I am Thine,
Is there on earth a closer bond than this,
That 'My Beloved's mine, and I am His?'

To Thee, Thou bleeding Lamb, I all things owe;
All that I have and am, and all I know.
All that I have is now no longer mine,
And I am not mine own;—Lord, I am Thine.

How can I, Lord, withhold life's brightest hour
From Thee; or gathered gold, or any power?
Why should I keep one precious thing from Thee,
When Thou hast given Thine own dear self for me?

I pray Thee, Savior, keep me in Thy love,
Until death's holy sleep shall me remove
To that fair realm, where, sin and sorrow o'er,
Thou and Thine own are one for evermore."
Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Week: PROGRESS

July 16. God's Expectations

There is unlimited progress possible in the Christian life. To have a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is a blessed thing; to have obtained a firm faith in Him as our personal Savior is a cause for great rejoicing. But the Lord expects us to go on. The wonderful possibilities of Christian development are set forth in one of Paul's prayers:

"For this cause I bow my knee unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:14-19).

An old farmer in the prayer meetings of his church was wont, in describing his Christian experience, to use the phrase, "Well, I'm not making much progress, but I am established." One springtime when the farmer was getting out some logs, his wagon sank in the mud in a soft place in the road and he could not get it out. As he sat on top of the logs reviewing the situation, a neighbor who had never accepted the principle of the old man's religious experience came along and greeted him: "Well, Brother Jones, I see you are not making much progress, but you're established."

To be spiritually stuck on the road is certainly not a very satisfactory situation.

Help us, our heavenly Father, to glimpse some of the possibilities of the life with Thee. Make us eager for advancement. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Week: PROGRESS

July 17. A Work of God

If God is permitted to guide our thinking, our willing, and our doing as Christians, there will be in our hearts a constant desire for growth in sanctification and consecration. We shall eagerly seek for the secret of progress. The first answer to our quest is that development in the Christian life, as well as its beginning, is the work of God. *"For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure"* (Phil. 2:13).

Especially in the early stages of their Christian experience are people prone to overestimate their own strength. Confidently many a one has set out to climb up to a higher spiritual level, and then some luckless day finds himself fallen into a pit of sin. Helpless he cries to God for forgiveness and power to make a new start. After some experiences of this nature he is glad of the opportunity to lean heavily upon God and to trust in Him for guidance and power.

And there is great encouragement in the assurance that God will not fail us. He has the power and the willingness to help us. Yes, He is far more eager to give than we are to receive. So we may come to Him daily, and many times a day, for strength, and He will bless us with spiritual energy far beyond our expectations. He will lift us up from one stage to another and put our feet in the way that leads into that fellowship with Him in which we are more and more "filled unto all the fulness of God."

O God, take us by the hand and direct our steps into largeness of life. Help us to realize our dependence on Thee and Thy means of grace for advancement in spiritual interests. Grant us grace to draw upon Thy resources. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Week: PROGRESS

July 18. Our Part—Obedience

While it is God that works in us both to will and to work, there is a condition which must be met by us, namely that of obedience. *"And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight"* (1 John 3:22).

From this passage it is very clear that unless we stand in the attitude of obedience to God, we shall make no progress.

This is the condition even for knowing the truth: *"If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself"* (John 7:17).

If we do not have this spirit of willingness, God simply cannot accomplish His purpose with us. He never forces anyone. He makes the appeal to our will, and on the decision of our will depends our development. If we are deliberately disobedient to God's commands, we cannot hope to grow in grace, holiness or power. We cut ourselves off from the source of power.

The relation between Christ and Christians may be compared to a lighting system. There must be some connection between the light and the source, such as the electric wire, which connects the light with the power house. If we are disobedient, we cut off this connection so that power no longer flows into our lives from Christ. The disobedience need not be in any great matter. It takes only a small grain of foreign matter, oftentimes, to cut off an electric current. So a small sin unrepented of may cut us off from Christ.

"If Thou hast called me to resign
What most I prize, it ne'er was mine;
I only yield Thee what is Thine:
'Thy will be done!'

Renew my will from day to day,
Blend it with Thine, and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,
'Thy will be done!' "

Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Week: PROGRESS

July 19. Life from Life

The condition for spiritual progress which consists in a personal relationship with the Lord is beautifully pictured by Jesus Himself in the allegory of the vine and branches:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:1-8).

Here we are face to face with essentials. Life and vigor can come from no other source than life. If we would live and progress spiritually, we must be in vital union with the Lord of spirits. There is no other way.

"Jesus, I long for Thy blessed communion;
Yearning for Thee fills my heart and my mind;
Draw me from all that would hinder our union;
May I to Thee, my beginning, be joined;
Show me more clearly my hopeless condition;
Show me the depth of corruption in me,
So that my nature may die in contrition,
And that my spirit may live unto Thee!"
Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Week: PROGRESS

July 20. Martha and Mary Types

The need of close fellowship with Christ is strikingly emphasized in the story of the Bethany sisters.

When Jesus came, Martha immediately became active in preparing to serve Him a good dinner, while Mary sat at His feet listening to the wonderful words of life that came from His lips. Martha was plainly displeased with Mary's attitude and somewhat disappointed in Jesus, too, for not rebuking Mary.

Jesus gives His view of the situation in this judgment: *"Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her"* (Luke 10:41-42).

We need the Martha type of people. There is danger, however, of their losing their spirituality altogether unless they also take time to sit at Jesus' feet.

All our so-called Christian activity, church attendance, Bible reading, prayer, and works of benevolence are failures without vital contact with Jesus.

If we truly appreciate this truth, we would depend less on our activities and seek more fervently the power which Christ can give to those only who live close to Him.

"I know no life divided,
O Lord of life, from Thee;
In Thee is life provided
For all mankind and me;
I know no death, O Jesus,
Because I live in Thee;
Thy death it is which frees us
From death eternally."

Teach me, Lord Jesus, my utter dependence on Thee. Help me to be quiet in Thy presence and draw invigorating strength from Thee. Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Week: PROGRESS

July 21. The Radiance of God

In the book of Exodus we are told of the sojourn of Moses with God upon the mountain for forty days. *"And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses knew not that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with him"* (Exodus 34:29).

Moses had been so long and intimately with God that the radiance of God was reflected from his face.

Again in the book of Acts, where the trial of Peter and John before the High Court of the Jews is recounted, the record says: *"Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13).

It may be that there was no visible radiance emanating from the disciples to suggest the glory of Christ, but there is extreme significance in the statement that the Jews "Took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

Yes, constant walking with God transforms men. We cannot devoutly contemplate God for any length of time without progressing in purity, honesty, unselfishness, love, power, and attractiveness of Christian personality. It will show in our speech, our conduct, our whole manner of being. The "Practice of the presence of God" is the secret of spiritual progress.

"O Thou, to whose all-searching sight
The darkness shineth as the light!
Search, prove my heart: it pants for Thee;
Oh, burst these bonds, and set it free.

Wash out its stains, refine its dross;
Nail my affections to the cross!
Hallow each thought; let all within
Be clean, as Thou, my Lord, art clean."

Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Week: PROGRESS

July 22. The Goal

The objective in Christian progress is trenchantly set forth in these comprehensive words of Paul: *"And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love"* (Eph. 4:11-16).

Here are some of the elements comprised in the goal of spiritual progress: unity of faith, knowledge of God, full-grown stature, stability in doctrine, loving truthfulness—and all of them summed up in this, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." What a goal!

> "O wondrous Lord, our souls would be
> Still more and more conformed to Thee;
> Would lose the pride, the taint of sin,
> That burns these fevered veins within;
> And learn of Thee, the lowly one,
> And like Thee all our journey run."

Help us, dear Jesus, to fix our eyes upon Thee. Let us see in Thee the perfect pattern. Help us to grow more and more like Thee. In Thy own name we pray. Amen.

Thirtieth Week: ADVERSITY

July 23. A Testing Experience

"In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; yea, God hath made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out any thing that shall be after him" (Eccl. 7:14).

To every human being there comes more or less of adversity during his life time. This rule applies to the Christian also.

Sin has wrought awful havoc in the world. Misfortune, sickness, sorrow, and death are some of its consequences. In such a world we cannot expect everything to be always pleasant and easy or to come our way. We must expect disappointments and hardships. Sometimes the causes are within us, sometimes without us. The significant thing is that we act wisely in the presence of adversity.

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes gives us good advice: "In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider." "Consider" that is the clue to wisdom in the presence of adversity. When things go against us, let us stop and think. At times a very sober experience is necessary to make us do that. And in our consideration let us bear in mind that it is God who hath made prosperity and adversity "the one side by side with the other." He has some meaning with it all.

Dear Father in heaven, we thank Thee for everything. Help us in the day of adversity to believe that in Thy love to us Thou hast some purpose with our affliction. Even when our vision cannot penetrate the darkness, grant us grace to trust in Thy love and wisdom. Let every affliction increase our confidence in Thee. Hear us, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirtieth Week: ADVERSITY

July 24. Illness.

One of the most trying forms of adversity is protracted ill health. It has the effect of making everything look dark and hopeless. It is not only the suffering of body that the sick person has to endure, but the thought of being inefficient and of becoming a burden to loved ones harasses his mind. And sometimes one is even tempted to lose faith in God Himself. Certainly, as Christians we should be very thoughtful of persons so afflicted.

Sickness has, however, for many a one become an avenue to the finest spiritual development. The inspired writer has helpfully expressed the service of affliction in the words: *"All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness"* (Heb. 12:11).

During Dr. Payson's last illness a friend, coming into his room, remarked sympathetically, "Well, doctor, I am sorry to see you lying here on your back." "Do you know why God puts us on our backs, at times?" said Dr. Payson, smiling. "No," was the answer. "In order that we may look upward."

Let us always remember that God's highest purpose with us is spiritual. If illness comes, let us use all proper means to regain health, but above all let God have His way with our souls. And many a time spiritual health will lead us back to physical well being.

"Jesus gives us joy and tears,
Blessed be His name forever!
When thy way most dark appears,
Trust in Him, despond thou never;
Weary soul, when sore distressed,
Call on Him and be at rest."

Dear Jesus, give us such a faith as this. Amen.

Thirtieth Week: ADVERSITY

July 25. Loss of Property

"Before I was afflicted I went astray;
But now I observe thy word" (Ps. 119:67).

A young man had worked for years to establish himself as a peach grower and had invested his all in a small peach orchard which bloomed bounteously—then came the frost. He didn't go to church the following Sunday, nor the next, nor the next. His minister went to hunt him up and inquired the reason. The discouraged young fellow exclaimed: "No, and what is more, I'm not coming any more. Do you think I can worship a God who loves me so little that He will let a frost kill all my peaches?" The old minister looked at him a moment in silence, and then replied kindly: "Young man, God loves you better than He does your peaches. He knows that while peaches do better without frost, it is impossible to grow the best men without frosts. His object is to grow the best men, not peaches."

Money, goods, property are blessings of God entrusted to our care for a time. But if the Lord sees that our hearts are becoming too much wrapped up in them or that we are getting into the attitude of mind of trusting in these things rather than in Him, God may find it necessary to take them away from us.

Our gracious God and Savior, we thank Thee for Thy earnest concern for our highest welfare. May all Thy dealings with us draw us more intimately into Thy fellowship. If losses come to us, may the experience serve to teach us the untrustworthiness of material things. Teach us to set our hearts on the true treasures that shall not pass away. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

July 26. Loss of Dear Ones

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Of all the afflictions that come to us, perhaps none is harder than the loss of dear ones, especially if they are young and full of promise. It is very hard, yes, often impossible, for us to understand. But these things do not happen without the knowledge and will of God.

A rich king once gave a beautiful pearl to a poor woman. This treasure gave her exceeding joy; her chief care was to keep it safe. One day the king came and took the pearl into his hands and carried it away with him. The lonely woman wept in her sorrow, fearing she had been unfaithful. Then the king came and gave her a diamond, filled with beautiful sunlight. This she kept longer than she had kept the pearl, and it filled her with delight. One day, the king said, "My daughter, give me the diamond; I have need of it." She pleaded piteously, but at last yielded and gave up her treasure. Soon after the king invited her to his palace. On entering a beautiful room, she saw both the pearl and the diamond in splendid settings, far more brilliant than when she surrendered them.

Let us be firmly assured that the ways and the thoughts of God with our loved ones are far higher than ours could possibly be. He has a setting in heaven for His precious gems.

"In God, my Savior,
I put my trust alone;
His word and favor
My help in need I own;
My life I tender,
And all I have as well,
In full surrender,
To Thee, whose grace I tell,
My soul's befriender,
My God, Immanuel."

Amen.

Thirtieth Week: ADVERSITY

July 27. A Result—Strengthening

"If thou faint in the day of adversity,
Thy strength is small" (Prov. 24:10)

Adversity has been called a sort of moral gymnasium in which the disciples of Christ are trained to robust exercise, hardy exertion, and severe conflict.

It is a well-known fact that the sturdiest characters, as well as the most vigorous bodies, come out of the strenuous type of life. Ease and luxury, comfort and indolence may be attractive enough for the self-indulgent individual, but they do not make for moral hardihood. It is no real kindness of God to surround us always with pleasant things. We need effort to develop our moral and spiritual muscle. We need to be exposed to difficult situations that will force us to call upon God to develop in us heroic qualities. It is said that when the larch tree was brought from Southern Europe into England, the gardeners thought that because it came from a warm climate it needed heat. So they tried to grow it in hothouses, but it withered and seemed to die, and they threw it out of doors. Then, however, it began to grow, and became one of the most beautiful trees of England.

It is necessary for God sometimes to take us out of the spiritual hothouse and throw us into the midst of the world's blasts of adversity in order to make sturdy Christian personalities of us.

Save us, O God, from spiritual deterioration because of easy living. Take us and fashion us according to Thy high plans. May the hard experiences that come to us be used of Thee for the toughening of our moral fiber. Help us to overcome difficulties and grow strong in the process. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirtieth Week: ADVERSITY

July 28. A Result—Humility

Paul's experience with the thorn in the flesh is an illuminating illustration of the uses of adversity.

"And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted over much, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch. Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

How we all are prone to become puffed up and overly confident of our own strength! We have had certain successes, perhaps, and have come to think pretty well of ourselves and to feel less need of God's sustaining power, when the Lord suddenly plunges us from our high exaltation into some humiliating failure. The Lord has a hard time of it to get us to learn the lesson "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness."

"Father, whate'er of earthly bliss
Thy sovereign will denies,
Accepted at Thy throne of grace,
Let this petition rise:

Give me a calm, a thankful heart,
From every murmur free;
The blessings of Thy grace impart,
And let me live to Thee.

Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine
My path of life attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And bless its happy end."

Amen.

Thirtieth Week: ADVERSITY

July 29. Remember God's Love

It is difficult to see love in the hand that smites us, but affliction is one of the ways God has of exercising His concern for us.

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,
And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6).

A skilled surgeon about to perform an operation on the ear said reassuringly to the patient: "I may hurt you, but I will not injure you."

So our great soul Physician finds it necessary at times to perform an operation on us. Some noxious growth may have developed on some part of our spiritual anatomy. It hinders our soul-life, and if permitted to remain, may even cause spiritual death. It will hurt, to be sure, to have it removed, but when God undertakes the operation, let us be abundantly assured that it is His great Savior love that prompts the action. He may "hurt" us, but He certainly will not "injure" us. Richer life, more abundant spiritual health is His only purpose.

In His loving thoughts for us He would have us develop into the finest, strongest, humblest, kindest Christian personalities. He would have us well poised, self-controlled, Spirit-led individuals. And hard experiences sometimes constitute the only agencies by which our souls can be fashioned into the similitude of the perfect Image.

"To guard and keep me, never cease,
From all that is defiling;
Preserve me also from false peace,
When life is smooth and smiling.
Should dangers rise,
And me surprise,
And clouds around me gather,
Teach me to pray,
And childlike say,
'Help me, my God and Father!' *

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-First Week: FAITH AND DOUBT

July 30. The Curse of Doubt

"If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us. And Jesus said unto him, If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth. Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:22-24).

Perhaps there is not a single Christian that has not been affected more or less by doubt. This affliction is as old as the race. It was way back in the Paradise garden that Satan injected into the world the element of doubt by his subtle question to the woman: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" Even to the firmest believer, to the most mature Christian there come moments when he begins to wonder whether his faith is well based, whether it is really true what he has been believing. Doubt is a part of the imperfection of life in this present world. It is not a comfortable thing to carry around with one. It undermines faith, it robs of peace, it destroys joy. It is one of the Devil's many devices for tormenting and destroying the souls of men. We should therefore be on guard against doubt and fight against its entrance into our hearts.

But at the same time we should not lose our balance when doubts do come. Let us accept the situation as something to be expected as a part of a normal Christian experience. This does not mean that we should surrender to our doubts and acknowledge ourselves defeated. Our aim should be a complete and joyous victory. But what is important to emphasize in the presence of doubt is that we retain our Christian poise.

Omnipotent, allwise, and loving Father, help us under all conditions of life not to lose sight of Thee. May Thou be for us the eternal rock of stability which stands unshaken amid all the storms that rage about us. Help us always to believe in Thee. Amen.

Thirty-First Week: FAITH AND DOUBT

July 31. A Cause of Doubt

In order to be able to act wisely in the presence of doubt it is necessary that we recognize clearly the nature of this enemy of our souls.

What is it that causes doubt? In answer we may say that the reasons are many.

One very common cause of doubt is the urge of the human intellect to understand and to rationalize all things.

Now, reason is a gift of God, and it is His will that we should use it. How utterly handicapped we would be in the presence of life's problems if we were lacking this faculty. Just remember how pitiful is the condition of the person whose reason is deranged.

We are to use our reason in the spiritual realm as well as in the sphere of the natural world. But reason has its limitations. Even in common everyday matters of life there are many things we do not understand, and we have to proceed in faith. If a complete understanding were a requisite, no one could drive a car or listen to a radio. And when it comes to spiritual things, our limitations are still greater, for these things partake of the nature of a higher realm. To understand completely God and the supernatural we should have to be like God Himself. Paul expressed this truth strikingly when he said: *"For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of God"* (1 Cor. 2:11).

O God, we thank Thee for the powers of our minds and for the opportunities for their development. But we pray Thee also that Thou wouldst teach us the wisdom of seeing our own limitations. Preserve us in humility. Teach us to realize the greatness of Thy mind in comparison with ours. Grant us grace to trust where we cannot see. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-First Week: FAITH AND DOUBT

August 1. Youth and Doubt

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom;
Yea, with all thy getting get understanding" (Prov. 4:7).

It is in the period of youth when the powers of the intellect are most actively being unfolded that doubt is most apt to appear. The young person is engaged in the process of learning to understand things, to reason out problems, to move in the realm of facts and findings, premises and conclusions. He feels it as his business to try to understand all things.

When in this frame of mind the youth encounters the realm of the spiritual and supernatural and discovers that this sphere presents propositions in which he cannot sound bottom by means of his intellectual tools, he is tempted to grow impatient. He wants to apply in the spiritual sphere the processes and methods of investigation employed in the natural sciences, and when these do not seem to yield tangible results, he is disposed to throw overboard the whole world of God and the supernatural as being unreal. With his profound respect for reason, he is prone to think that he is stultifying himself if he accepts anything that he cannot understand. Faith looks to him like a piece of ignorance, childishness, or superstition.

His difficulty is that he does not have a sufficiently broad conception of what is included in the term "understanding." He has failed to recognize that faith, as well as reason, is an organ of knowledge. The "understanding" and "wisdom" of which the wise man in Proverbs speaks embraces the revelations of God as well as the researches of men.

Dear God, wilt Thou in Thy loving kindness lead the young people out into the realm of the largest truths that they may praise and glorify Thee as the God of light. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thirty-First Week: FAITH AND DOUBT

August 2. Job's Problem

One of the most illuminating portions of God's word dealing with the problem of man's intellectual littleness as over against the greatness and wisdom of God is the closing sections of the book of Job. The man Job, renowned for his patience, had apparently come to the end of his rope in his ability to bear up under suffering, and, being afflicted with grave doubt as to the goodness and wisdom of God, had said some very hard things about God and His dealings with men.

"Then Jehovah answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,
Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?
Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare, if thou hast understanding.
Who determined the measures thereof, if thou knowest?
Or who stretched the line upon it?
Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened?
Or who laid the corner-stone thereof,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:1-7).

In similar strain the Lord continues to set forth in verbal panorama His wonderful works and providential care of His creation, and then confronts Job with this challenge:

"Shall he that cavilleth contend with the Almighty?
He that argueth with God, let him answer it"
(Job 40:2).

Dear God, teach us, as Thou didst Job, the difficult lesson of humility in the presence of Thy greatness, Thy wisdom, and Thy goodness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-First Week: FAITH AND DOUBT

August 3. Job's Repentance

The instruction which the Lord gave to Job in his perplexity and doubt was productive of good results. Job recognized his errors of mind in bringing into question the beneficent qualities of God, and in manly fashion registered his repentance.

"Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee?
I lay my hand upon my mouth.
Once have I spoken, and I will not answer;
Yea, twice, but I will proceed no further" (Job 40:4-5).

"I know that thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of thine can be restrained.
Who is this that hideth counsel without knowledge?
Therefore have I uttered that which I understood not,
Things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.
Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak;
I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.
I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now mine eye seeth thee:
Wherefore I abhor myself,
And repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:2-6).

It was a hard lesson for Job to learn, but his understanding from that time on was far more broad and adequate than it had been before.

God in heaven, help us to bend the knee in adoration of Thee. Teach us the true wisdom which by faith embraces the world that we cannot see with our eyes. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-First Week: FAITH AND DOUBT

August 4. Paul's Wisdom

There is a passage in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians which sheds clear light on the problem of the relationship of human and divine wisdom.

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

"We speak wisdom, however, among them that are full grown; yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; . . . . But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words. Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:2-16).

Lord teach us the highest wisdom. Amen.

Thirty-First Week: FAITH AND DOUBT

August 5. The Remedy

There are other kinds of doubt besides those which spring from intellectual grounds. Many are due to weakness because of our failure to feed steadily upon the Word of God. Others arise out of our disobedience to the will of God. Grave questions arise in our hearts as to whether or not God will receive us back into fellowship when we have sinned.

Whatever the causes of doubt, the remedy is to take them directly to Jesus. He has given us the wondrous assurance: *"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6:37).

Doubts simply cannot endure the presence of the Son of God. Before Him they vanish into thin air. Oh, how many perplexed and troubled souls would have been saved days and nights of anguish if they had but brought their problems and doubts to Jesus instead of trying to resolve them by their own poor powers!

Go to Jesus. Tell Him your doubts. Ask Him to give you light. Pray Him to increase your faith. Ask Him, if the problems cannot all be clearly solved, to give you such confidence in Him that placing your hand of faith in His you may walk with Him trustingly step by step all the way.

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high;
Hide me, O my Savior! hide,
Till the storm of life is past;
Safe into the haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last!"

Dear Lord Jesus, take away the doubts that hinder our fellowship with Thee. Let us be so constantly guided by the light of the Holy Spirit that we may always see Thee clearly as our Savior and Friend. Amen.

Thirty-Second Week: STEADFASTNESS

August 6. Two Pictures

At the close of His sermon on the mount, as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus set forth this parable: *"Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And everyone that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof"* (Matt. 7:24-27).

No doubt, every person who has read this parable has experienced a sense of the tragedy involved in the fall of the house built upon the sand, especially since it symbolizes the failure of a human life that had a fine chance to succeed.

On the other hand, who has not felt in his soul a deep yearning to be like the house built upon the rock that stood firm even in the midst of the most severe storms? It is a striking and a beautiful picture of the steadfast man whose life is solidly founded in truth and is built up in all its parts in harmony with the eternal principles of righteousness.

Steadfastness is an admirable quality in the Christian.

O God, Thou faithful God, help us to build our lives upon the rock of Thy eternal truth. Grant that we who have heard so much of Thy Word may not fail in the times of testing and trial. Make us strong through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thirty-Second Week: STEADFASTNESS

August 7. A God's Nobleman

Enemies of Daniel at the court of king Darius plotted against him to destroy him. *"But they could find no occasion nor fault, forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God"* (Daniel 6:4-5).

So they had the king issue a decree that *"Whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O King, he shall be cast into the den of lions"* (Daniel 6:7).

Then comes the account of one of the most heroic acts in all the annals of the human race. *"And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; (now his windows were open in his chamber toward Jerusalem;) and he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime"* (Daniel 6:10).

What a picture of steadfastness! What nobility is possible in a poor creature of clay when that clay holds a soul of heroic mold! How many of us in the presence of such a man of God have felt thoroughly shamed by our own cowardice and wavering in our Christian profession and conduct!

O God, help us to know the greatness of soul possible to one who lives intimately with Thee. Help us so to draw upon Thy resources of power that we may conquer our natural weakness and stand against the world with the strength of God. Lead us into that nobility of soul by which we may glorify Thy holy name. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirty-Second Week: STEADFASTNESS

August 8. The Testimony Concerning John

On one occasion Jesus asked the multitudes gathered about him their opinion concerning John the Baptist: *"What went ye out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken with the wind?"* (Matt. 11:7).

To ask the question was to answer it. Everyone knew that John was anything but "a reed shaken with the wind." He came out of the wilderness possessing no wealth, no social prestige, no backing by powerful organizations, but the Lord had built into his soul the adamantine qualities of conviction of truth, courage of confession, and steadfastness of purpose.

His was the function to call people to repentance, and his words fell as hammer blows upon the hardness, the pride, the prejudice, the sins of publicans, soldiers, high officials in church and state. Nothing could sway him from his steadfast purpose—neither favors, nor bribes, nor threats, nor dangers.

Therefore Jesus could give him the testimony: *"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of woman there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist"* (Matt. 11:11).

It is truly a mark of depth of character, of true greatness to hold steadily to a difficult course, especially when such a course is unpopular. John stood the test.

Heavenly Father, as Thy children, we need Thy help. When temptations come to us to swerve from the path of duty, may we be strong to resist. Help us always to act nobly and fearlessly. Grant us grace to fix our purposes so steadfastly on worth while objectives that, by Thy help, we shall carry them through to success in spite of all obstacles. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Second Week: STEADFASTNESS

August 9. Abiding Faith

The quality of steadfastness in the Christian may appear in his witnessing, as in the case of Daniel, and in the pursuit of his life purpose, as in the case of John the Baptist. It may also appear in connection with his faith. It is this of which Paul speaks when he sets forth the following ideal for Christians: *"Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ"* (Eph. 4:13-15).

A faltering faith, uncertainty as to what one believes, is a mark of immaturity. It is an evidence of lack of apprehension of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Therefore Paul was eager that the Christians might pass on in "knowledge of the Son of God" from the childhood stage, where they were subject to all manner of vacillations, to that full grown development where they were able to stand firm in the truth.

What a pitiful thing it is to find a person who is so unsettled in his faith that he professes a different kind of religion every time you meet him. If he would consent to be guided by the Spirit of God, he would be led into all truth and be established in his faith and spiritual convictions.

O Thou who hast so clearly revealed Thyself and Thy purposes in Thy Word, help us to drink deeply of the fountain of truth. Create in us an abiding faith in Christ as our Savior and King. Amen.

Thirty-Second Week: STEADFASTNESS

August 10. The Secret of Stability

The readers of the letters of St. Paul were familiar with the appearance and the equipment of the Roman soldier—the very emblem of stability. With rich imagery the apostle paints a picture of the Christian soldier, but notice that in this case he points to God as the source of strength and stability.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:10-18).

We thank Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, for the power that comes from Thee. Help us to live so intimately with Thee that we may draw upon Thy resources and be equipped for steadfast warfare against all enemies of Thy kingdom. Help us to make use of every form of spiritual means that may increase our effectiveness as soldiers of the cross. Give us of Thy strength. Amen.

Thirty-Second Week: STEADFASTNESS

August 11. Four Precepts

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

Here we have very definite and practical suggestions as to how we may be preserved in steadfastness.

"Watch ye." It is necessary to be constantly on guard. We never know from what angle temptation may come. Sometimes it is so insidious that we do not recognize it unless we look very sharply. It is the part of a good soldier never to be caught unawares. In Christian warfare, too, watchfulness is imperative.

"Stand fast in the faith." As Christians we believe certain things that we cannot see with our physical eyes. Let us permit no one to rob us of the reality of the unseen. Let no materialistic or naturalistic philosophy destroy our appreciation of spiritual values.

"Quit you like men." That means be not weak, or childish, or cowardly. Let it be known that you have convictions and that you are ready to fight for them if need be.

"Be strong." Strength is essential. But it is not your own strength that is meant here. "Be strong in the Lord."

"At the battle of Waterloo it was the stable qualities of the British soldiers that saved the day. They stood there as a human wall, like columns of steel. The French poured volley after volley of shot and shell into their ranks. Men were mowed down like grain. Amidst the din of battle, but one cry was heard, 'File up! File up!' And men stepping over the bodies of dead comrades again formed the line. Napoleon could not defeat such men as that."

O God, make us reliable and stalwart soldiers in Thy Christian warfare. Help us, through Christ our Lord, to acquit ourselves in service in such a way that we may honor our great Captain. Amen.

August 12. A Steadying Truth

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever" (Heb. 13:8).

Sometimes the thought comes to us: How much easier it would be to live consistent, steady, Christian lives if Jesus were with us in visible presence as He was with the disciples; if we could but see Him in His rugged strength of character and steadiness of purpose.

But now we have definite assurance that Jesus has not changed a particle, and that He has promised to be with us always, "even unto the end of the world."

In that truth is wondrous strength. When the foundations upon which we stand seem to be in danger of being shattered, we may call to mind that Christ, the rock upon which His church is built, stands forever securely firm. He is, and will remain, the same Christ in His power, so that we may trust Him; the same in His wisdom, so that we may follow Him; the same in His mercy, so we may beseech Him for grace.

Amid all the changes, fluctuations, storms, and conflicts of the ages we may confidently cling to the changeless Christ, with the assurance that, though all things else tumble in ruin, the eternal Son of God and His truth will tower "o'er the wrecks of time" in matchless glory. If we are united with Him by a living faith, we share in His qualities of stability.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!
What more can He say than to you He hath said,
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?

"Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand."

Lord Jesus, give us a firm faith in Thee as the changeless One. Amen.

Thirty-Third Week: THANKFULNESS

August 13. A Beautiful Trait

"Oh, that men would praise Jehovah for his loving kindness,
And for his wonderful works to the children of men!"
(Ps. 107:21.)

The spirit of thanksgiving is a characteristic that beautifies the Christian life. There is in the world so much of selfish grasping; so much of the spirit of getting ahold of everything in sight for selfish use or enjoyment that we are greatly refreshed by the appearance of the attitude of sincere gratefulness.

In contrast to the spirit of positive ingratitude thankfulness appears in attractive dress. A striking illustration of the two attitudes is presented to us in connection with Jesus' healing of the ten lepers. We read: *"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell upon his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Were there none found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?"* (Luke 17:15-18).

Through all the centuries of Christian history the ugliness of ingratitude has marred the record of the nine Jews who had been healed of the dreadful disease and yet had no words of thanks to offer, while the Samaritan stranger by his gratitude has drawn to himself the respect and admiration of all men.

Thankfulness is a truly beautiful trait.

"Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for He is thy health and salvation!
All ye who hear,
Now to His temple draw near,
Join me in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord! Oh, let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before Him!
Let the Amen
Sound from His people again;
Gladly for aye we adore Him."

Amen.

Thirty-Third Week: THANKFULNESS

August 14. Exhortations to Thanksgiving

The Bible is full of references to thankfulness and of admonitions to give expression to the spirit of gratitude. The Psalms, especially, overflow with these ideas. In beautiful and impressive poetry the appeal comes to us:

"Oh, come, let us sing unto Jehovah;
Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving;
Let us make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."
(Ps. 95:1-2).

"Oh, sing unto Jehovah a new song:
Sing unto Jehovah, all the earth,
Sing unto Jehovah, bless his name;
Show forth his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
His marvellous works among all the peoples" (Ps. 96:1-3).

The whole of Psalm 100 is an exhortation to praise God.

"Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all ye lands.
Serve Jehovah with gladness;
Come before his presenee with singing.
Know ye that Jehovah, he is God:
It is he that hath made us, and we are his;
We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
And into his courts with praise:
Give thanks unto him, and bless His name.
For Jehovah is good; his loving kindness endureth for ever,
And his faithfulness unto all generations."

Gracious God and heavenly Father, teach us the spirit of gratitude. Help us to acknowledge Thee as the giver of every good and perfect gift. Let the spirit of thankfulness lift us up out of sordid selfishness into grateful, spiritual fellowship with Thee. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Third Week: THANKFULNESS

August 15. Reasons for Thankfulness

There are reasons in abundance why we should be grateful to God. His greatness, His majesty, His holiness, His wisdom, His love, His mercy, His providence, should all evoke from our hearts an answering response of praise.

The poet comes to our aid in our efforts to formulate the reasons for our thankfulness:

"For the beauty of the earth,
For the glory of the skies,
For the love which from our birth
Over and around us lies;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our grateful psalm of praise.

"For the wonder of each hour
Of the day and of the night,
Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon and stars of light;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our grateful psalm of praise.

"For the joy of human love,
Brother, sister, parent, child;
Friends on earth, and friends above,
Pleasures pure and undefiled;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our grateful psalm of praise.

"For Thy Church that evermore
Lifts her holy hands above,
Offering up on every shore
Her pure sacrifice of love;
Lord of all, to Thee we raise
This our grateful psalm of praise."

Amen.

Thirty-Third Week: THANKFULNESS

August 16. Thanksgiving for All Things

It is not difficult to find some things to be thankful for, but the Apostle Paul confronts us with the ideal of *"giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father"* (Eph. 5:20).

What does this mean? Are we to give thanks for hard and unpleasant things; for pains and sorrows; for disappointments and disaster; for losses and misfortunes? If a tornado comes along and levels our homes with the ground, are we to give thanks for that too? Yes, that is exactly what the apostle says: *"Giving thanks always for all things."* The Christian may always be assured of this that God desires his highest welfare. *"We know that to them that love God all things work together for good"* (Rom. 8:28).

This, truly, it is not always easy for us to see. But we shall get larger glimpses of understanding if we steadily bear in mind that the superlative objective in God's concern for us is the eternal salvation of our souls. No earthly disaster, however great, can for a moment compare with the loss of the soul. Now, if the Lord sees that our hearts are becoming too closely bound to the earthly things, He may find it necessary to take some of these things away from us. It hurts, to be sure, but being assured of God's enduring wisdom and love, we should pray for grace to give thanks even for the hard things.

"What our Father does is well:
Blessed truth! His children tell!
Though He send, for plenty, want,
Though the harvest store be scant,
Yet we rest upon His love,
Seeking better things above."

O God, help us to understand Thy ways with us, and even when we cannot understand, help us to be thankful. Above all things, save our souls. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Third Week: THANKFULNESS

August 17. How It Grows

The practice and the habit of thankfulness do not come all at once. Growth in appreciation is a long process.

When Job had been visited with one disaster after another, he still was able to say: *"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"* (Job 1:21).

Job did not accidentally stumble upon that attitude. It represents the results of long years of walking in fellowship with God.

How many grief stricken parents have stood beside the still form of a beloved child. They may be ready to admit that it was the Lord who gave them the child; also that it is the Lord who has taken it away; but to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord" is far from easy. That takes a great deal of grace. Such an attitude can be present only in souls that are completely surrendered to the will of God. Usually it comes only after many halting steps in an attitude of mingled trust and fear have been taken. There has, through the schooling of the spirit, been developed in the soul a little less of trust in one's own wisdom and strength and, little by little, a more trustful leaning upon God, His strength, His wisdom, and His love.

Out of such ground grows the spirit of thanksgiving. And oh, how it blesses life with peace and poise to be able to bless God for all the experiences He sends us! Happy is the soul that even through tears is able to look up to God and say: "Blessed be the name of the Lord."

> "Nearer, my God, to Thee,
> Nearer to Thee!
> E'en though it be a cross
> That raiseth me;
> Still all my song shall be,
> Nearer, my God, to Thee,
> Nearer to Thee!"

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Third Week: THANKFULNESS

August 18. Expressions of Thankfulness

"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4:6).

There are many ways in which we may express our gratitude. It is a fine practice we have in our country of observing "Thanksgiving Day," when all our people are urged by our President to assemble in their churches to render thanks to God for His many, rich, and undeserved blessings.

But every day should be a thanksgiving day. Not a day comes to us that is not filled with God's benevolence. Surely, then, not a day should pass without grateful thought of God's goodness.

We may express our thankfulness in words. The praises of our lips, if they come from the heart, rise as sweet incense before the throne of God. It is a beautiful practise to begin every prayer by thanking God for all His goodness. In the words of Paul: "With thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

We may make known our gratitude by our deeds and by our whole living. It is a cheap and utterly unworthy expression of gratitude to utter eloquent words of praise and then by one's deeds to dishonor the name of our Lord. Consistency between profession and performance is nowhere more to be desired than here. If we really love God and are grateful for His many blessings, we shall make it manifest by living lives thoroughly in harmony with His will.

"Now thank we all our God,
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today."

Lord God, let all our being be a song of praise to Thee. Amen.

Thirty-Third Week: THANKFULNESS

August 19. An Evidence of Spirituality

"And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father" (Eph. 5:18-20).

Thankfulness has been called a barometer of the spiritual life. And in truth there is a vital and subtle relationship between this trait and other characteristics of spirituality.

Thankfulness teaches trust in God. If the Lord is permitted to develop in us the attitude of thanksgiving, there will go along with that a larger confidence that God is doing well with us even if we cannot always see His love clearly.

Thankfulness is a cure for grumbling. It is an excellent teacher of cheerfulness. The counting of one's blessings has removed many a dark cloud. Someone has put it this way:

"There are great numbers of people who ought to move on November 25. They are living in a bad atmosphere, poor houses and gloomy surroundings on Grumbling Street. But we know a good street where, strange to say, there are plenty of houses to let. The air is pure and invigorating, the water is sweet and wholesome, the houses are good, and the street lies toward the sun, so that its genial rays are felt all day long. The street is Thanksgiving Avenue, a boulevard extension of Faith Street. Move out, my friend, from Grumbling Street and take one of those pleasant unoccupied houses on Thanksgiving Avenue."

"Ten thousand, thousand precious gifts
My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
That tastes those gifts with joy."

Dear Lord, let the flower of gratitude flourish in the garden of our souls. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Thirty-Fourth Week: LIFE WORK

August 20. A Grave Problem

"For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:7-8).

What shall I do with my life? This is a question that causes most young people grave concern.

As long as the young person continues in school or college, the question does not become so urgent, but when one's school days are drawing to a close, the question of a vocation looms big before him.

It is right that every person should be deeply concerned about this problem, for much depends upon its settlement. We have but one life to live; we do not get another chance. If this one life is wrongly spent, a terrible sense of disappointment will be our portion at its close. The choice of a life work also affects deeply the joy and satisfaction we shall experience during life. A wrong choice may make our whole life a series of regrets, whereas a right choice may fill life's cup to the brim with satisfying content.

Every right-thinking person wants his life to count for something; he wants a full, rich, abundant life. It is therefore of superlative importance that he face at the very outset the problem of how to invest his life so as to bring the largest returns, both in time and eternity.

Dear Father in heaven, Thou who hast given me life and all my powers, help me to consider very frankly and soberly how to spend my life. Give me a deep and steady desire to make a decision that shall lead to success in the largest sense. Help me above all to come into such a useful career that Thy name shall be glorified by my life work. Grant my prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirty-Fourth Week: LIFE WORK

August 21. The Will of God

The most fundamental consideration in the determination of one's life work is the will of God.

In this respect Jesus set us a perfect example. Notice these statements: *"For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me"* (John 6:38). *"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work"* (John 4:34). *"I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me; he hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that are pleasing to him"* (John 8:28-29). *"And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt"* (Matt. 26:39).

The same thought was uppermost in the mind of Saul when, after the vision on the Damascus road, he cried: *"What shall I do, Lord"* (Acts 22:10).

The universe is God-centered. Nothing possesses real significance except in so far as it is related in some manner to God and His purposes and plans. This is true of individuals as well as of nations. What is the will of God for my life? This is the most important question I can ask regarding the problem of my life career. If my life is lived apart from, or contrary to, the will of God, it will assuredly be more or less of a failure, but if lived in harmony with His purposes, it cannot but be a success.

"As God doth lead me I will go;
I do not ask to choose my way;
Content with what He doth bestow,
Assured He will not let me stray.
So as He leads, my path I make,
And step by step I gladly take,
A child in Him confiding."

Dear Lord, give me a consecrated purpose to do Thy will. Amen.

Thirty-Fourth Week: LIFE WORK

August 22. Has God a Plan for Me?

If we say that it is of the highest importance for our best welfare to do the will of God, the question naturally arises, "Has God a plan for my individual life?"

We cannot but believe that He has. Would He have created us with a purpose? If He marks even the sparrow's fall, does He not have a purposeful concern for so great a thing as a human life? If He has counted the very hairs of our heads, has He not taken thought for our careers?

God's thoughts concerning us are given a striking poetic expression by the psalmist when he sings:

"For thou didst form my inward parts:
Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb,
I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made:
Wonderful are thy works;
And that my soul knoweth right well.
My frame was not hidden from thee,
When I was made in secret,
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.
Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance;
And in thy book they were all written,
Even the days that were ordained for me,
When as yet there was none of them.
How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!
How great is the sum of them!
If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand:
When I awake, I am still with thee" (Ps. 139:13-18).

Dear God, help me to realize the wondrousness of the thought that Thou hast a plan for my life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Fourth Week: LIFE WORK

August 23. Can We Know God's Will?

If God has a plan for my life, it would seem imperative that I find out what it is. Is that possible?

Yes, the Lord gives us good reason to believe that it is possible for us to find out what He wants us to do.

Meditate on these passages:

"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go;
I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee"
(Ps. 32:8).

"The sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out" (John 10:3).

"And one, Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt there, came unto me, and standing by me said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And in that very hour I looked up on him. And he said, The God of our fathers hath appointed thee to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth. For thou shalt be a witness for him unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22: 12-15).

From these and many other portions of God's Word, it seems clear that God will reveal to us, in one way or another, what He has in mind for us and will lead us into the doing of His will. He will not leave us to fumble around in the dark without guidance.

Gracious Lord, Thou art wonderfully good to us. Thou hast promised us guidance. Leave us not in uncertainty as to Thy plans for us. Open our eyes to see the sign-posts along the way. Lead us into a knowledge of Thy will and give us courage to do it, in the strength that is in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Thirty-Fourth Week: LIFE WORK

August 24. Conditions of Knowledge

If we are to discover truth in any realm, we must conform to the conditions required in each case. In biology we must use the microscope, in astronomy the telescope, in chemistry the test-tube, and so on in every field.

If we are to discover the truth concerning the will of God, we must conform to the conditions of His kingdom. One of these conditions is a cleansed heart: *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God"* (Matt. 5:8).

Another condition is righteous living: *"None of the wicked shall understand; but they that are wise shall understand"* (Dan. 12:10).

Another is open-mindedness: *"Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word"* (John 8:43).

Still another is the light of the Holy Spirit. *"Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man"* (1 Cor. 2:14-15).

One more condition is obedience. Jesus says, *"If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself"* (John 7:17).

Along these avenues shall we enter into the knowledge of God's will. We can sum it all up in these words: A life wholly surrendered to God.

"My Jesus, as Thou wilt!
Oh, may Thy will be mine!
Into Thy hand of love
I would my all resign.
Through sorrow, or through joy,
Conduct me as Thine own,
And help me still to say,
My Lord, Thy will be done!"

Amen.

Thirty-Fourth Week: LIFE WORK

August 25. Likes and Dislikes

The will of God is revealed to us in part through our likes and dislikes. It is a fairly safe assumption that the Lord wants us to do what we like to do, for our inclinations are generally determined by our abilities. We like to do what we can do well.

We may, with fair safety, therefore, eliminate from consideration as a life-work those vocations in which we have no interest. That narrows the field of choices for our ultimate decision and makes the problem less difficult.

However, there is need of caution in following our likes and dislikes. For one thing, our environment, experience, and training may have been narrow and limited, and there may be in us unsuspected capacities and powers that we do not recognize until some wider experience or special circumstance brings them to light. Hence, every worth while experience that comes to us should be welcomed as a possible agency in revealing us to ourselves.

Another point of caution is that we are prone to let our sense of ease, comfort, pleasure, or false-modesty stand in the way of entering upon a calling that may carry with it many hardships, but to which God clearly calls us.

A striking illustration of this attitude is that of Moses, who, when called by the Lord to deliver His people from bondage, introduced a long list of objections, with the words: *"Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"* (Ex. 3:11).

Lord God, show me Thy will. Reveal to me the abilities with which Thou hast endowed me. Show me the task Thou hast in store for me, and may not self-love stand in the way of its performance. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Fourth Week: LIFE WORK

August 26. Practical Suggestions

"And I (Paul) said, what shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do" (Acts 22:10).

This incident in the life of Paul admirably illustrates several very practical considerations in finding out the will of God.

The first is prayer for guidance. Paul asked for that. No earnest Christian will try to find his way even in relatively small things without prayer, and certainly in so important a matter as the determining of a life work he will pray much.

The second suggestion is: Listen to the Lord's voice. Paul did that. God speaks to us through His Word. The Christian struggling with the problem of his life work will get much light from a prayerful and thoughtful reading of his Bible. It is wonderful how clearly God speaks to us through the inspired Word if we have eyes that see and ears that hear.

In the third place, be content to be shown a little of the way at a time. Paul's first instructions were to arise and go into Damascus. There a fuller revelation awaited him. The practical application of this principle for us is to perform the task that is right at hand with the full confidence that, when that is done, God will in some way show us the next duty before us. We do not need to see our path all the way to the end. One step at a time is all we need to take.

Dear Lord, help me to walk with Thee in trusting faith that Thou wilt show me the way.

"Keep Thou my feet! I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

Amen.

Thirty-Fifth Week: THE KING'S SERVICE

August 27. Royal Vocations

There are many honorable callings in which a Christian may serve, but there is one set of vocations which gives a person an opportunity to spend all his time and energy directly in service to God and humanity. These occupations include the work of the ministry, the missionary, the deaconess, the teacher of Christianity, the Christian social worker, the Christian writer, and whatever other form of Christian service that requires a person's whole time.

These occupations have divine sanction. Paul says: *"But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, And gave gifts unto men. . . . And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"* (Eph. 4:7-8, 11-13).

These are royal vocations. They are especially attractive to those Christians who are eager to spend themselves completely in the Lord's ripe fields, gathering in the harvest of souls.

We praise Thee, our Lord and King, for the privilege of serving Thee. Wilt Thou call many noble souls into Thy full time service. Hold before our youth the challenging ideal of giving everything to Thee. Accept Thou the offering of consecrated lives, given to Thee in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Fifth Week: THE KING'S SERVICE

August 28. The Ministry

A particular institution within the Christian church is the ministry. Of this the apostles were the prototype. The number of congregations soon became so large that the apostles were not able to give personal attention to all matters or to every church. So others were appointed over the churches, and there gradually developed the office of the pastor. The names "elder" and "bishop" were also used.

"And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called to him the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto him, Ye yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, after what manner I was with you all the time. Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:17, 18, 28).

All Christians may use the means of grace. But it has been found expedient in the history of the church to set aside certain men in the office of the ministry to administer the means of grace. This tends to good order and also centers responsibility for leadership. The pastor, by virtue of his office, stands as God's representative. He is an ambassador of Christ, and to his office is due all respect.

It was a fine tradition in former days that the eldest son in the family was to be set aside for the holy ministry. Happily this idea still obtains in many homes. Certainly it is a source of real satisfaction to consecrated parents to have a son devoting all his time to the building of the kingdom of God.

"Father, be Thy blessing shed
On Thy chosen servant's head;
Savior, needed grace impart
To sustain and keep his heart;
Holy Spirit, with Thy fire
Touch his lips, his soul inspire,
That Thy truth through him be told
Fearlessly to young and old."

Amen.

Thirty-Fifth Week: THE KING'S SERVICE

August 29. The Christian Deaconess

It is a part of God's plan for the redemption of the world that not only men but also women should be set aside for full time Christian service.

The office of the Christian deaconess dates back to the time of the apostles. Paul writes: *"I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church that is at Cenchreae: that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of mine own self"* (Rom. 16:1-2).

There are many forms of service which Christian women are, as a rule, better qualified to perform than men: the care of the sick, the aged, the orphan children, and other unfortunates; home visitation and other forms of parish work.

And why should not women be privileged to spend all their time and strength in the King's service?

Our Lutheran churches have established deaconess homes where Christian women may be trained for the ministry of mercy. In these homes some of the deaconesses live while engaged in service, and to them others return from distant fields for rest and fellowship. For all of them the home is a beloved refuge when their period of active service has come to a close.

The ministry of the Christian deaconess is a sorely needed and a God pleasing work. Everywhere sickness, suffering, want, loneliness await the blessed presence and the gentle touch of the consecrated Christian woman.

Lord Jesus, Thou who dost so well understand the ministry of mercy, wilt Thou richly bless the Christian deaconesses who have dedicated their lives to merciful ministry. Wilt Thou call many more into Thy service, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Thirty-Fifth Week: THE KING'S SERVICE

August 30. Other Opportunities

"Thy Kingdom Come" (Matt. 6:10).

The callings of the minister and the deaconess do not exhaust the opportunities for full-time Christian service.

The teaching of Christianity in elementary or higher schools offers attractive work to anyone whose heart beats with interest and enthusiasm for leading children and young people into a knowledge of Christ and His saving plans for the world. The growth of the week-day church school movement will open up an increasing number of opportunities for consecrated Christian teachers.

Another field of growing importance is that of Christian social service—a program of physical relief and betterment, combined with a definitely spiritual ministry to the souls of men, women, and children. This method is Christ-like indeed and is revealing to Christians new outlets for the desire to serve Him. A dinner to a starving man, a job whereby an unemployed father may earn an honest living for his family and himself, a helping hand when a wretch is down and out—these are effective ways of getting a hearing for the Gospel.

There are other openings for full time work in the King's service—the writing and publication of Christian literature at home and in the foreign mission field, the managing of Christian institutions and funds, and other lines. By all of these we may help the coming of the rule of our King.

Dear God, bless all Thy servants and give them joy and success in their work. Open the eyes of many aspiring young men and women to see the need of ministering to fellowmen in the spirit of Christ. We pray in the name of the Great Servant. Amen.

August 31. Qualifications

In a sense, the qualifications for full time Christian service are none other than those possessed by Christians in general. There must be an experience of sin and a faith that lays hold on Christ as Savior; there must be full obedience to the Lord's will and complete consecration to His program. If these qualifications are present, one may be assured of usefulness and blessing in the work.

But having these qualifications, the person drawn to this work will, and must, train to the highest possible degree of perfection every ability he possesses. If he has been given ten talents, let him use faithfully every one. Native ability is not the decisive thing for success. There are striking illustrations of even one talent men and women who have done splendid work, because they have been implicitly obedient and wholly consecrated to their Master.

The Apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, calls attention to some very desirable special qualifications for the Lord's service.

"Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. The bishop therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, soberminded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (But if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

We pray Thee, dear Lord, that Thou wilt use the abilities offered to Thee in service, to the honor of Thy great name. Amen.

Thirty-Fifth Week: THE KING'S SERVICE

September 1. The Call

Must not a person have a special call to full time Christian service? Yes, but do not worry about that. If the Lord has some work of this kind for you to do, He will see to it that you get the call.

What there is for you to do, is to put your life completely under God's control. It is for you to be willing to do what God wants you to do. If you live such a surrendered life, if you study God's word intelligently and in prayer seek His guidance in everything, God will give you the special call if He wants you to have it. But remember—the first requisite is the unquestioned willingness to obey.

There is no patent device for detecting the inner call. Experience varies greatly with different individuals. If the Lord calls you, however, there will grow up within you a deepening conviction that the Lord wants you in His service, and if you get the call, you will never be thoroughly happy or satisfied until you heed it.

If the Lord wants you, He will also accompany the inner call with an outer call extended through a congregation or other Christian agency.

God's method is especially clear in the case of the Apostle Paul. After Paul's complete surrender the outer call came in the following manner: *"Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas, and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away"* (Acts 13:1-3).

Dear Jesus, Lord of the church, wilt Thou make Thy call clear to every soul that Thou dost desire in Thy service, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Thirty-Fifth Week: THE KING'S SERVICE

September 2. Need of Heroism

"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:3).

Work in the King's service is no easy occupation, as some people seem to think. There is hardship to endure, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

These callings require close application in the way of preparation, and continued study after entering into the work. The work day is often very long; there are the many different kinds of people to deal with; there may be misunderstanding and problems that bring wakeful hours at night. And always there is the opposition of the Devil, the world, and our own flesh. "Where God builds a church, the Devil builds a chapel alongside."

In foreign service there is the sacrifice of leaving loved ones at home, of foregoing the comforts of a Christian culture, of putting up with conditions that are often far from agreeable. There is oftentimes lack of appreciation, exposure to pestilence and persecution, and sometimes a martyr's death.

Yes, these callings demand heroic qualities which will make a man or woman go through hard things for the sake of his Master.

It is the part of wisdom to face these facts squarely and to guage one's consecration by the costs involved.

But let it also be said that a favorable decision reached in the face of the difficulties brings a satisfaction which nothing on earth can measure.

"Lord, pour Thy Spirit from on high,
And Thine appointed servants bless;
Thy promised power to each supply,
And clothe Thy priests with righteousness.

"Wisdom and zeal and faith impart,
Firmness and meekness from above;
To bear Thy people on their heart,
And love the souls whom Thou dost love."

Amen.

Thirty-Sixth Week: UNIVERSAL SERVICE

September 3. God's Plan

"For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that was a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a shilling a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard" (Matt. 20:1-7).

Work for the Lord is not limited to the special callings which require a person's whole time. In the Lord's kingdom the principle of universal service is in force. It is God's plan that every Christian should have a part in the work of the church. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" There must be leadership, to be sure, officers of higher and lower orders, but in the end everything under God depends upon the men and women in the ranks.

In his life work, whatever it may be, the Christian is really serving God by doing his work as well as he can. But he will also be on the lookout for something to do in the church in addition to his life work. The Christian should not be satisfied merely with making a living; he should be eager to make some contribution directly towards making living worth while for his fellowmen.

In the spirit of loving gratitude every Christian will desire to serve.

"Lord, Thou needest not, I know,
Service such as I can bring;
Yet I long to prove and show
Full allegiance to my King.
Thou an honor art to me;
Let me be a praise to Thee."

Amen.

Thirty-Sixth Week: UNIVERSAL SERVICE

September 4. The Church a Working Unit

"We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

A church is a place of worship where the members come together to praise God, to be edified, to be instructed in the faith; but it is more than that.

A church is a place where the members come together for fellowship—a place where they may enjoy social intercourse in a Christian way; but a church is far more than a social club.

In addition to serving these purposes the congregation may be thought of as a working unit, and the church plant as its basis of operations. The church should give impetus, inspiration, and instruction for doing work in the Lord's vineyard.

From the worship, the edification, the instruction, the fellowship in the church, Christians should go out with high purpose to labor with God for the reclamation of individuals from lives in sin, and for the spiritual and moral transformation of community, state, nation—yes, for bringing the whole world into allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, for an awakening of the Christian church to a consciousness of its responsibility to work the works of God while it is day! The opportunity is still with us! Oh, for more of the spirit of Jesus, whose meat it was to do His Father's will.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, wilt Thou in mercy forgive the shortcomings of Thy people in their service to Thee. But, O Lord, wilt Thou also mightily stir us to a far more adequate sense of what we owe to Thee and to our fellowmen. Arouse Thy church to a vivid consciousness of its obligations to extend the sphere of Thy kingdom. Hear our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirty-Sixth Week: UNIVERSAL SERVICE

September 5. The Local Field

"Son, go work today in the vineyard" (Matt. 21:28).

What work is there to do? There is an abundance of it everywhere. There is service on the church council and boards; there is teaching, or administrative work, in Sunday school or in week-day school of religion; there is singing in the choir and the necessary faithful practice; there is making people feel welcome and comfortable by solicitous ushering at services and at meetings; there is speaking to the stranger after service and making him feel that he has come among friends; there are the duties of officers and committees in the Luther League, Ladies' Aid Society, Men's Brotherhood, and other church organizations; there is visiting the old and sick in their homes; there is looking after the poor and unfortunate; there is taking care of children so the mother can go to church; there is inviting to your home a lonesome young man or woman who is away from home.

Oh, there is no lack of work to do. Love will find more than it can accomplish.

What wonderful congregations we would have if all the members were eagerly on the lookout for some work in the Lord's vineyard that needs to be done. Our congregations would throb with zeal, the King's business would prosper, and everyone would be happy to have a share in a noble work.

Thus may I serve Thee, gracious Lord!
Thus ever Thine alone,
My soul and body give to Thee,
The purchase Thou hast won:
Through evil or through good report
Still keeping by Thy side,
And by my life or by my death,
Let Christ be magnified!

Amen.

Thirty-Sixth Week: UNIVERSAL SERVICE

September 6. Personal Work

There is one form of Christian work which is sadly neglected to the great detriment of our own spiritual life and that of others. It is what is generally called personal work. That means putting forth effort at winning individual persons for Christ.

This is a kind of work that tests severely our own Christianity and requires great wisdom and tact. It is no doubt true that Christians are variously endowed with this ability, but all of us could cultivate the power to a degree if we were vitally concerned.

Jesus used this method. Note His conversation with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the rich young ruler. And when He called His disciples, He asked them to go and speak to others. One of the most beautiful and significant records of personal work is that of Andrew, after he had met Jesus. *"One of the two that heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He findeth first his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah (which is, being interpreted, Christ). He brought him unto Jesus"* (John 1:40-42).

Why is it so hard to speak to people about us of the most important things in the world? If we saw a person drifting down stream towards deadly rapids, we would not hesitate to cry out a warning. But how often has it not happened that people about us have drifted into spiritual destruction without a word of warning from us.

Is not the trouble this that we are more or less lukewarm in our own spirituality? Consequently, we are not as deeply concerned about the salvation of other souls as we should be. May the Lord arouse us out of our languor and give us a real passion for souls.

Dear Jesus, help me to realize how precious every soul is in Thy sight. Give me eagerness in my heart to help bring at least one soul to Thee. Hear me for Thy love's sake. Amen.

Thirty-Sixth Week: UNIVERSAL SERVICE

September 7. The Wider Field

"And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).

Christ is the head of the church, and there are many members, among whom there should exist the finest attitude of fellowship and co-operation in carrying forward the Lord's redemptive program.

Certain kinds of Christian work cannot be done to advantage by the individual Christian or by separate congregations. For instance a single congregation would usually not be able to maintain an institution of higher learning, to carry on foreign missionary work, or operate a publishing house. Therefore congregations have united into synods in order the better to carry on work of this larger character. The main lines of such synodical activity are Christian education, home and foreign missions, institutional benevolence, publications, and pensioning of pastors and pastors' widows.

In this way the many hands linked together in the larger brotherhood can extend their service to the ends of the earth.

Doesn't it stir your imagination, friend, to think that you may have a share in this larger work of the Lord? Consider that you, living here in America, may through such co-operation extend the influence of your prayers, your gifts, and your service into distant Asia and into the heart of Africa!

Merciful and loving Savior, unite Thy followers with a spirit of brotherhood to work together for the widest extension of Thy saving gospel among dying men. Wilt Thou richly bless our co-operative efforts, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Thirty-Sixth Week: UNIVERSAL SERVICE

September 8. Individual Responsibility

If the ideal of a working church is to be even partially realized, there must be a sense of responsibility on the part of every member. All too often the work is left solely to the pastor. He is to carry on not merely the public ministry, but all the personal work and private ministries as well.

If a member has done wrong, it seems to be the pastor's business, and that of no one else, to speak to him. This is all wrong.

The pastor is the leader, by virtue of his office, but he is not the sole worker. In some congregations the officers and boards show a fine spirit of co-operation and churchly industry. And that is well. But the ideal should be—everyone at work. Everyone should have some work for which he holds himself responsible. It may not seem a very big or important task, but nothing is small when done in the love and fear of the Lord.

The apostle Paul has given effective expression to the great truth that all abilities are to be faithfully employed in the Lord's service. *"For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness"* (Rom. 12:4-8).

"Hark! the voice of Jesus crying,
'Who will go and work today?
Fields are white, and harvests waiting.
Who will bear the sheaves away?'
Loud and long the Master calleth,
Rich reward He offers thee:
Who will answer, gladly saying,
'Here am I; send me, send me'?"

Dear Jesus, help us to make such a response. Amen.

Thirty-Sixth Week: UNIVERSAL SERVICE

September 9. The Spirit of Church Work

There is often a shameful spirit manifested in regard to church work. It is too frequently looked upon as an unwelcome task, to be avoided altogether or gotten out of the way as fast as possible, something done unwillingly and grudgingly, something that interferes with one's personal comforts or selfish pleasures.

Oh friends, how do you suppose such a spirit looks in the sight of God? Paul's attitude was altogether different: *"I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome"* (Rom. 1:14-15).

And again: *"The love of Christ constraineth us"* (2 Cor. 5:14).

The spirit of church work should be one of gratitude, gladness, and willingness. There should be gratitude for God's wondrous mercy—think of all He has done for us: given us life and all things, redeemed us from death by His Son's blood, called us to be His children! There should be gladness because of the privilege of being a co-worker with God—think of the honor and dignity bestowed upon us by this distinction!

There should be willingness to serve because of the great need of humanity and because of our loyalty to our Savior King. Whether our task be great or small, pleasant or unpleasant, we should be happy to perform it because we love God and our fellowmen.

How the work of the Kingdom would move forward by leaps and bounds if the Spirit of the Savior dominated His followers!

"O Thou, before whose presence
Naught evil may come in,
Yet who dost look in mercy
Down on this world of sin;
Oh, give us noble purpose
To set the sin-bound free,
And Christ-like tender pity
To seek the lost for Thee."

Amen.

Thirty-Seventh Week: THE CHRISTIAN HOME

September 10. An Arena for Service

"But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

The arena for Christian service that lies nearest at hand for most people is the circle of the family. It has been said that the essence of home is the spirit of service.

In the family relationship parents serve for the benefit of the children. Normally the father, as provider, and the mother, as homemaker, work together in love and fellowship in order that they may supply to their children the food, clothing, shelter, education, and other elements that are necessary for a healthful development of body, mind, and soul. And the right kind of parents find deep satisfaction in this service.

But the children, too, have a share in the program of service in the home. They may be helpful to one another and may do much to lighten the loads which father and mother are carrying. In running errands, in helping with the housework, in innumerable little ways the children may be helpful. Sometimes, too as wage-earners, the children will be able to contribute to the support of the family.

The home is a severe test of a person's Christianity. The place called home may be a hell on earth if the spirit of selfishness, anger, and bitterness prevails. But, oh, what a wonderful place is home when the spirit of Christ rules in the hearts of parents and children!

Dear God, whom we are privileged to call Father, bless our home with the presence of Thy Spirit. Grant that Thy love to us may be a pattern for our love one to another; for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirty-Seventh Week: THE CHRISTIAN HOME

September 11. Choosing a Life-Mate

"Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?" (2 Cor. 6:14.)

Every young person normally looks forward to a home of his or her own. That is God's own thought for us. The choice of a life-companion is one of the most important matters that any young person is ever called upon to face. The consequences for time and eternity are enormous. This matter should, therefore, be approached most thoughtfully. And the Christian young person will pray much over it.

If care is taken, many wrong choices will be avoided. Instead of letting the choice be determined by a pretty face merely, skill on the dancing floor, or ability to entertain, the thoughtful and prayerful young Christian will look to qualities of character, such as purity, honesty, dependability, industry, thrift, kindness, and thoughtfulness.

Ordinarily matings within the same social group are the most fortunate. Most important of all is the consideration that one's life companion be a Christian. Usually, too, it is highly desirable that both belong to the same church.

Between persons of such qualifications there is the largest probability of a developing of that enduring love which is basic to the right relationship of husband and wife, parents and children.

Dear heavenly Father, we pray Thee to bless our young people in the serious question of the choice of life-mates. Teach them thoughtfulness. Help them to realize the importance of a right foundation for the home. Give them grace to ask Thy help and guidance. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Seventh Week: THE CHRISTIAN HOME

September 12. Importance for Character

"Correct thy son, and he will give thee rest;
Yea, he will give delight unto thy soul" (Prov. 29:17).

In the development of Christian character a very great deal depends on the home. Many men of eminence in church and state have testified that they are what they are because of good homes. And the reason is not far to seek. The members of the family circle live in a very intimate relationship. Each person strongly influences the other. The child breathes the atmosphere about him. If that atmosphere is bad, his life is polluted; but if it is good, the child will be influenced in the right direction. If a child hears cursing and swearing in the home, it is not to be expected that he will develop a reverential attitude towards God and holy things. But if God and His word are held in high esteem, the child will be trained in the love and fear of Him. It is safe to say that the home more than any other human factor, determines the character of men and women.

If the home is such an important factor in character development, it follows that a heavy responsibility rests upon the parents. They exercise the first molding influence upon the child. This influence is tremendous, because the children naturally look up to their parents with love and respect. Witness the little boy who is sure there is no man in all the world as strong as his father.

Many parents take their responsibility for the children's spiritual development altogether too lightly. They seem to forget that the souls of their children need nourishment and tending as well as their bodies.

Dear parents, your children with their immortal souls have been bought by the blood of Jesus. They belong to Him by right of purchase. Will you be guilty of keeping them away from Him?

Dear God, help us fathers and mothers to be right parents in the presence of our children and before Thee, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirty-Seventh Week: THE CHRISTIAN HOME

September 13. The Family Altar

"And he removed from thence unto the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Ai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto Jehovah, and called upon the name of Jehovah" (Gen. 12:8).

Of all the influences in the home there is none more potent in spiritual growth and development than the family devotional life. When the family circle is gathered around the table, or the fireside, and father or mother or an elder brother or sister takes the Bible, or other devotional book, reads the beautiful words of life, and the members sing and pray together, there are registered impressions upon the young child nature that all eternity will not efface. The Word of God shall not return void. The child may later in life become callous to many things, but his heart strings will vibrate at the thought of the home with the family circle gathered about the Word and prayer.

Is it not a blessed thing for parents and children thus to join in worship at the family altar? Every problem in the home may be brought to God. When there is some important question to be settled, the family circle may pray over it. When a son or daughter is going away for a time, God's special blessings may be asked for him or her, and when they return, how the joy of the home-coming is deepened and beautified by thanksgiving and praise. How infinitely poor is the boy or girl who goes out into life without such a heritage. Do you dare, father and mother, to rob your children of this blessing by neglecting the family altar? Do you dare to meet God on the great day, and face the question, "What did you do for the soul life of the children I gave you?"

Oh, our Father in heaven, help us to realize the blessings of the family altar and hold Thou before us always our holy responsibility for the spiritual impress of our homes. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

September 14. The Father a Priest

"But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" (1 Peter 2:9).

It was one of the large achievements of the Lutheran Reformation to reaffirm the principle of the universal priesthood of believers. It is a blessed truth that all Christians may approach the throne of grace, in the name of Jesus offer praise and thanksgiving, and pray for the forgiveness of sins and for all spiritual and material blessings.

But there is a special sense in which the father, or head of a household, may be spoken of as a priest. By virtue of his position in the home there devolves upon him not only an obligation for providing material things; there comes to him also responsibility for leadership in the religious life of the family circle.

This does not mean that he alone shall read the Word and offer prayer in the family devotion. Other members may also do that. But it does mean that upon the head of the family rests the holy responsibility for maintaining the family altar, for seeing to it that the family regularly devotes itself to the worship of God, by the reading of His word and prayer. No father or family head is discharging his whole duty who does not do this. He is not fulfilling his highest function in the home if he neglects the family altar.

"O love divine and tender,
That through our homes dost move,
Veiled in the softened splendor
Of holy household love,
A throne without thy blessing
Were labor without rest,
And cottages possessing
Thy blessedness are blest."

God bless the fathers and the mothers for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirty-Seventh Week: THE CHRISTIAN HOME

September 15. Status of the Family Altar

It seems to be generally true that family worship does not hold the place in the consciousness and in the life of our people that it once did. Why is it that an institution so significant for time and eternity has fallen into disuse? Some blame it to the rush of modern life, some to the prevalence of newspaper reading, some to the automobile. But these are superficial reasons. Basically, the reason is a weakening of the sense of need of God in our lives. We are so prosperous and so satisfied that we leave God out of account. We seem to get along very well without Him.

This is one of the most dangerous states into which a people can come. And the most serious thing about it is that people do not seem to be aware of their condition.

A graphic picture of such a situation is painted by our Lord in His description of the days of Noah: *"For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away"* (Matt. 24:38-39).

And at a later time in the history of Israel the Lord through His prophet Jeremiah repeatedly laments: "My people have forgotten me." What a terrible indictment against a people so richly favored! What will be said of us if we forget God?

Gracious Father in heaven, have mercy upon our people and save them from spiritual atrophy. Send Thy Spirit mightily among us that we may be awakened to a realization of our danger and that Thy altar may be reinstated in spiritually empty homes. Arouse the parents to a deep sense of responsibility for spiritual guidance of the children. Save our homes from spiritual death. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Seventh Week: THE CHRISTIAN HOME

September 16. What Can Be Done?

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16).

If our people are not to suffer spiritual destitution and death, the family altar must in some way be maintained, or restored if it has fallen into disuse.

How can this be done?

First of all, let there be united prayer to the Lord of the church for a pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit that our people may be awakened to a realization of their danger before it is too late.

Then let the head of every household realize his holy responsibility to maintain worship in the home.

Let there be set a definite time for the family to worship together. The morning is the best time. But it happens in many homes that not all the members of the family take breakfast together; so no rule can be laid down to fit all cases. But if family worship is to have its right place and significance, the daily regularity of it must by all means be maintained. If there is no one time of the day when the whole circle can be gathered together, then choose the time which is convenient for the largest number. The others may worship by themselves. This leads to the remark that family worship should not make superfluous the individual devotional practice of Christians. Both practices should be maintained for the cultivation of a robust spirituality.

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, put love for Thee so largely into the hearts of Thy people that the spirit and the practice of worship may never be absent from our homes. Grant Thou power to overcome all hindrances that stand in the way of home worship. Let Thy name and word be honored in every home. Amen.

Thirty-Eighth Week: HIGHER CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

September 17. Place in the Church

"The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom;
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"
(Prov. 9:10).

An exceedingly significant department of church work is what we call higher Christian education. By this term we mean the work done by the secondary schools, colleges, and teacher training schools of the church, and the theological seminaries.

The establishment and maintenance of these institutions have been due to the combined efforts of groups of congregations or synods.

The leaders of the church early recognized that under the American condition of the separateness of church and state it was incumbent upon the church to develop its own educated leadership. The state could not be counted on for this service. So from the very beginning of church work in America higher Christian education has had a definite place in its program. Some of the finest chapters in our American Lutheran history are those which record the educational vision of leaders and the united and sacrificial efforts put forth by our people in building, endowing, and maintaining our higher church schools.

As a rule these institutions have been the objects of much love, devotion, and concern; and much of our church history is inseparably tied up with the careers of these schools. They have served also as dynamic factors, radiating cultural and spiritual influences in widening circles among our people. They have been spiritual rallying centers.

We thank Thee Lord, because Thou didst guide our fathers in the building of institutions of learning, that Thou didst teach them that the highest wisdom begins with the love and fear of Thee. We thank Thee for all the sacrifices for Christian education that have been made, and we pray Thee that we in our generation may carry the good work forward in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Eighth Week: HIGHER CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

September 18. Its Spirit

It is the aim of every sincere worker in an institution of Christian education to make its spirit the spirit of Christ, in harmony with Paul's words to the Ephesians: *"For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which ye show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him"* (Eph. 1:15-17).

Christianity is made basic in both the curriculum and the life of the school. There is definite instruction in the courses in religon; teachers and students meet daily for worship at the chapel hour; grace is said at meals; voluntary religious organizations are active in furthering the Christian life and activity among students; and when Sunday comes, all are urged to go to the Lord's house for worship. Such a program creates a spirit in the school which stimulates the Christian life and its program of service. The wandering may, by the grace of God, be brought to decision, the weak be strengthened, and the robust Christians become still more consecrated to the Lord's program.

The spirit of the Christian school is well reflected in these words of Woodrow Wilson: "The object of scholarship, the object of all knowledge, is to understand, is to comprehend, is to know what the need of mankind is. That is the reason why scholarship has usually been more fruitful when associated with religion: and scholarship has never, so far as I can at this moment recollect, been associated with any religion except the religion of Jesus Christ. The religion of humanity and the comprehension of humanity are of the same breed and kind, and they go together."

We thank Thee, Lord, for the spirit of Christian scholarship. Wilt Thou make it serve Thy purposes to the glory of Thy name. Amen.

Thirty-Eighth Week: HIGHER CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

September 19. Basic Importance

"For he established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which he commanded our fathers,
That they should make them known to their children;
That the generation to come might know them,
Even the children that should be born;
Who should arise and tell them to their children,
That they might set their hope in God
And not forget the works of God,
But keep his commandments" (Ps. 78:5-7).

A little thought will convince any open-minded person that our higher church schools are of basic importance in the life of individuals and in the work of the church. In that most formative period of life, which is spent in the pursuit of an education, it is supremely significant that the principles of true Christianity be brought to bear upon the developing personality. In that way only can a true philosophy of life and right ideals and attitudes be produced.

These are the words of Luther: "Therefore, I beg of you all, in the name of God and our neglected youth, not to think of this subject lightly, as do many who do not see what the Prince of this world intends. For the right instruction of youth is a matter in which Christ and all the world are concerned."

Bishop Welsh said: "Education without religion is simply veneering rotten wood."

Adoniram Judson, when passing a Christian college in Rochester, said to a friend: "Do you know what I would do if I had a thousand dollars?" "Yes, you would give it to missions," was the answer. But Judson replied: "I would put it in an institution like that. Building Christian colleges and filling them with students is raising the seed corn of the world."

Dear Lord, bless the work of our church schools in the developing of character and in the furtherance of Thy kingdom, to the glory of Thy name. Amen.

Thirty-Eighth Week: HIGHER CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

September 20. Need for the Ministry

"And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their boats to land, they left all, and followed him" (Luke 5:10-11).

In His plans for winning the world to His allegiance, Jesus recognized the need of a trained ministry; so He called twelve men and for a period of three years associated them with Himself in a sort of a traveling school of instruction and practice. Experience ever since has shown that if the church is to have an ample supply of properly equipped ministers, it must maintain schools in which such men can be trained. The early Swedish Lutheran colonists in Delaware passed out of existence as Lutheran congregations chiefly because they did not establish schools for this training of a ministry suited to their needs.

The need of theological seminaries seems to be recognized by everyone, but church schools which bring men to the seminary are also necessary. Samuel B. Capen, in "The Christian College," says:

"There never has been an hour in the history of this country when there was such a demand for men of the highest qualifications for the gospel ministry. Statistics show that our state colleges and universities furnish comparatively few men for the theological seminary. Figures obtained a few years ago showed that the Christian Colleges furnished ninety-three per cent of these theological students, and there is no reason to believe there has been any material change since."

Dear Jesus, wilt Thou bless the work of our schools in the training of a ministry with Thy love in their hearts and adequate to the needs of this day. We pray in Thy name. Amen.

Thirty-Eighth Week: HIGHER CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

September 21. Need for Teaching

Paul wrote to Timothy: *"Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

The teaching profession is a means of enormous influence. If we as a church desire to extend the reign of Christ over against the spirit of the world, we cannot afford to neglect the opportunities offered by the training of teachers. We need trained Christian teachers of religion in Sunday schools, week-day schools, Bible classes, church academies, and colleges.

But not only that. We need trained Christian men and women as teachers in our state schools, elementary, high schools, colleges, and universities. Teachers in these schools wield an enormous influence even though they are not permitted to give specific instruction in religion. If they are not Christian, their influence will be negative; if they are Christians, they have an opportunity for large influence upon boys and girls, young men and women, for the Christian life.

John R. Mott put the importance of Christian influence into trenchant words when he said: "Only as a nation is steadied. guided, and inspired by Christian principles will it fulfill its destiny; otherwise it will pass the way of other nations which have perished from the earth. The present peril of the nation is secularism."

And Mr. Capen wrote: "If you want Christian teachers, then support the Christian colleges, for they must furnish the teachers for the new states. It has been said, 'To teach the teachers is more than to write the songs or enact the laws of a nation!'"

Dear Lord, bless the teachers of our children and youth. May they learn of Thee and may they teach in harmony with Thy truth, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Thirty-Eighth Week: HIGHER CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

September 22. Need for Lay Leadership

"Ye are the salt of the earth."
"Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13, 14).

Our higher church schools are necessary not only for the training of ministers and teachers but also for the development of leaders among our lay people. The doctor, the lawyer, the engineer, the farmer, the manufacturer, the business man, the politician exert a wide influence. Oftentimes their words are shown greater deference than those of the pastor. By instilling the principles of Christianity into the minds and hearts of young men and women contemplating these vocations during the course of their higher training, the church schools are extending the reign of Christ into every sphere of life.

How often has not the cause of the Kingdom, both locally and synodically, been splendidly advanced by the intelligent service of the educated Christian layman. Christians are to be salt and light in the world. This applies in an intensified degree to the educated Christian in a position of influence and leadership.

Bishop Simpson once put it this way: "Educated mind rules the world, and if Christianity shall ever gain control of the world, it must establish and maintain colleges where educated minds are trained."

And W. E. Hogan writes: "The Church college leads the aggressive forces of the Church in all advancement. Upon her depends the future progress of all the varied and complicated lines of endeavor of the Church today, and there is not now, nor will there ever be, a substitute for the Christian college in yielding this much-needed supply of leaders."

Gracious Lord, Thou who dost guide the destinies of church and state, wilt Thou use our Christian schools in every way for the furtherance of Thy great saving cause. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Eighth Week: HIGHER CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

September 23. Some Words of Appreciation

"But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou has learned them; and that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

That our higher Christian schools have helped students to abide in their Christian faith, as Paul urged Timothy, is evident from the words of those who have been in attendance. In these testimonies, the name Christian College is used instead of the real name.

One student writes: "I must say that during the years that I have spent at Christian College, I have found a Christian sentiment among the students that is not found in secular schools. It is readily seen that the influence of the Christian school has helped a great number to take their stand for Christ and to choose the work in God's vineyard. As for myself, I hardly have words to express adequately my appreciation of the many blessings and great spiritual help that I received during my stay at Christian College."

Another student writes: "It gives me great pleasure to state from experience my idea of the influence a student receives at a Christian school. I am sure there can be no better place to mould a Christian character than at our Church Schools. I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to attend one of our Church institutions."

Still another writes: "In these Christian institutions we are daily impressed with the truths that pertain to the salvation of our souls. In Christian College half an hour a day is given to a devotional meditation on the Word of God aside from the regular hours for Bible study."

Dear God, we cannot sufficiently thank Thee for our Christian schools. Help us always to support them by our prayers, our gifts, and our influence. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Ninth Week: THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

September 24. A Christlike Service

By the ministry of mercy we mean those varied forms of church work in which Christians minister to the various classes of unfortunates. This is truly a Christ-like service. One of the most beautiful pictures which the gospels present to us is that of Christ moving about doing good to the unfortunates about Him—feeding the hungry, healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, making the deaf to hear, driving out demons, and raising the fallen.

This is the way Matthew pictures the Savior: "*And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people. And the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with demons, and epileptic, and palsied, and he healed them*" (Matt. 4:23-24).

From the very first the church has tried to emulate Christ in this work of doing good. Throughout the history of the church, no matter how gloomy the age may have seemed, there has shined through the darkness the love-light of Christian service to the unfortunates. Even if we had no other evidence, this work alone would give convincing proof of the heavenly origin of the church.

The work of ministering to the physical needs of men is not only thoroughly worth while in itself. It constitutes a most effective means for getting a favorable hearing for the gospel of saving grace for the soul. The first step in the winning of many an unfortunate for Christ has been an act of Christian kindness revealing real interest and good will. The Christian church cannot afford to neglect this opportunity for Christlike service.

Merciful Savior, we thank Thee because Thou hast introduced the spirit of kindness into the world. Help us to show forth Thy spirit in our ministries. Amen.

Thirty-Ninth Week: THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

September 25. The Aged

"Hearken unto thy father that begat thee,
And despise not thy mother when she is old"
(Prov. 23:22).

It is the solemn obligation of children to care for their parents in old age. It is a question whether any other duty among human beings is as sacred as this. Of all shameful conduct, the neglect of aged parents by children is the most reprehensible.

But there are some old people who have no children or near relatives to care for them, and there is no sadder sight than an aged man or woman left alone and destitute in the world. Christians have therefore erected homes where these old people may be tenderly cared for in the evening of their lives. Sometimes they have a little to pay with; often times they have nothing, but Christian loving kindness tries to care for them just the same. How happy these old people are in these Christian homes. They have no cares or worries; they have the Word of God richly dispensed among them; and they look forward calmly and hopefully to the last summons to enter into rest.

Much has been done, but much remains. There are many old people on the waiting list waiting patiently until there may be room for them to get into a home.

Should we not make some little sacrifice, friends, in order that more doors may be opened for the care of these friends of ours who have done their share of the world's work and are in need of loving service? Can we be happy in the enjoyment of good things so long as we know that destitute aged people are in need of food and shelter?

O God, wilt Thou put much of the spirit of mercifulness into the hearts of Thy people. Give Thy people special concern for the old people who are lonely and destitute. Let Christian love be fruitful in their behalf. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thirty-Ninth Week: THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

September 26. Orphaned Children

The home is one of God's own institutions, and some of the happiest hours enjoyed by human beings are spent in the loving premises of the home. But sometimes the home is broken up. By the death or unfaithfulness of father or mother, or both, the home is no longer in a position to function in normal fashion. Sometimes a mother is left in poverty with a group of young children. At other times children are left altogether destitute with no one to care for them. It must be a heart of stone that is not touched by such need.

The Christian church has regarded the service to orphaned children as an opportunity to show forth the spirit of true religion, as expressed by James: *"Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"* (James 1:27).

The church tries to take care of orphaned children either in Christian institutions or by finding individual Christian homes into which the children may be adopted. In the children's homes, by the generosity of Christian friends, the children are provided with a home, food, clothing, and schooling both in secular subjects and in the Christian religion. The aim is to have the children so brought up and educated that they may upon maturity go out into the world as Christian men and women and take an honorable place in church and state.

The home finding work is also a blessed activity. Thousands of homeless children and adopting parents are made glad each year by being brought together in a relationship of Christian love and care.

Dear Jesus, Friend of children, wilt Thou add Thy blessing to the work for the homeless little ones, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

Thirty-Ninth Week: THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

September 27. Defectives

"And they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to lay his hand upon him" (Mark 7:32).

Another class of people that call forth instinctively the sympathy of Christian hearts is that group of unfortunates who are defective in some respect—the blind, the deaf, the feebleminded, the epileptic, the crippled.

As a result of the leavening influence of Christian love modern states are doing a splendid work in providing homes for such unfortunate folk and in giving them such education and training as they are capable of receiving.

But the efforts of the state do not exhaust the possibilities for service. There are still many for the church to care for. And among those for whom the state provides physical necessities and secular education, there is a challenge to the church to provide Christian instruction and spiritual guidance. Bear in mind that these defective children for whom the state cares are away from home and cannot have the ministries of their home church. Pastors and teachers should therefore be provided by the church at large to supplement the work of the state by giving that Christian instruction which the state as such cannot give. And even after the period of training in the state institution is at an end, many of these people, because of their limitations, are in need of a special type of Christian ministration.

Certainly we should be eager to bring the defectives to Jesus in order that He may bless them.

We thank Thee, Lord Jesus, for Thy compassionate love. May Thy people follow Thy example to the blessing of many souls. We pray in Thy name. Amen.

Thirty-Ninth Week: THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

September 28. The Sick

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:33-34).

It is only since the advent of Christianity that humanity has really learned to take care of its sick. It has been said that before the introduction of Christianity there was not a single hospital in the whole Roman empire. And to this day among many heathen people the sick are left to shift for themselves, oftentimes being driven out of their homes into the street and even beyond the walls of the city. where they are left to die in fearful distress. Hospitals are monuments to the spirit of Christ. The church has proved itself a good Samaritan.

Fortunately modern governmental units have been sufficiently impressed with the spirit of Christianity to erect many, splendid, public hospitals where the sick are cared for, regardless of their ability to pay. But here, too, the task is too large for the state. There is urgent need and reason for hospitals erected and maintained by the free will efforts of Christians.

In church hospitals regular instruction in Christian truth and practice constitutes a part of the training of nurses, public devotions are held, patients are visited by the hospital rector, and the entire hospital is pervaded by the spirit of Christianity.

But also in public hospitals the church has a sacred privilege and duty in spiritual ministrations to patients through hospital or other pastors.

Bless, O Lord, the ministry of Mercy in the care of the sick. Give wisdom, love, and strength to Thy servants that they may lead the dying to their eternal home. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thirty-Ninth Week: THE MINISTRY OF MERCY

September 29. The Fallen

"And the scribes and the Pharisees bring a woman taken in adultery; and having set her in the midst, they say unto him, Teacher, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then sayest thou of her? And this they said, trying him, that they might have whereof to accuse him, But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. But when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground. And they, when they heard it, went out one by one, beginning from the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the midst. And Jesus lifted up himself, and said unto her, Woman, where are they? did no man condemn thee? And she said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more" (John 8:3-11).

Many a young girl has been led astray by an unprincipled man. The judgments of God upon sins of unchastity are severe, but for such sinners, also, there is forgiveness if they will but seek pardon at the throne of mercy. Christ showed, while on earth, that His love extends also to such, and thus sets an example for Christians in their treatment of the fallen.

Institutions have been established in which the love of Christ and Christians is made effective for this class of unfortunates; and many a young woman has been won for God and a better life by their ministries.

Let the hands of Christians not be raised in stone-throwing, but let them be extended to help. Let the spirit of Christ be ours. "He came to seek and to save that which was lost."

Dear Jesus, help us to understand the greatness of Thy mercy. Help us to be great-hearted towards those who have fallen into great sin, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

September 30. The Poor

The carrying out in the economic world of the principles taught by Christ would do far more than all other things put together to eliminate poverty from society. The principles of thrift, square dealing, and brotherhood, if put into practice, would solve the problem, and Christians should be untiring in their efforts at making operative the spirit of righteousness in the methods both of employers and employees. But we shall never reach perfection in this any more than in any other line. There will always be some employers unjust and selfish, and there will always be some employees shiftless, improvident, or unfortunate. The poor we will always have with us.

Now the Scriptures teach plainly that those who have plenty shall help the needy. Away back in the Old Testament times this specific instruction was given: *"If there be with thee a poor man, one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates in thy land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy poor brother; Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy brother, to thy needy, and to thy poor, in thy land"* (Deut. 15:7, 11).

To the rich, young ruler Jesus gave this advice: *"And Jesus looking upon him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me"* (Mark 10:21).

And the apostle John makes willingness to help the poor a test of one's Christianity: *"But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?"* (1 John 3:17-18.)

Help us, dear Jesus, to be compassionate to those in need. Teach us the true spirit of sharing, in Thy name. Amen.

Fortieth Week: MISSIONS AT HOME

October 1. God's Great Thought

"For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11).

It is God's great thought that all men everywhere should receive a knowledge of the blessed gospel which brings the tidings of salvation through Christ Jesus.

Humanity has erred and gone astray. Men once had a knowledge of the true God and worshipped Him. But as unbelief and disobedience became more and more general, the sons of men forgot the true God and took up with the worship of idols, and sin in all its horrid forms prevailed among the peoples of the earth.

But God did not forget His creatures whom He had endowed with capacities for life and communion with Him. He kept alive among His chosen people of Israel a knowledge of Himself, and all through the Old Covenant times a certain amount of light emanated from Zion.

However, it was not until the fulness of time, when Christ came, that the light of God's saving love shone forth in all its glory in the world. Then, as a fruit of the teachings of Jesus and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, it became increasingly clear to Christians that God wanted the knowledge of salvation communicated to every human soul near at hand and far away. It was at that time the missionary career of the Christian church began.

Gracious triune God, we thank Thee for Thy loving thoughts and plans for a lost humanity. Give us, O Lord, something of Thy vision of the world and something of Thy passion for human souls. Give Thy people eagerness to extend the blessings of Thy saving gospel wherever men dwell in spiritual darkness. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

Fortieth Week: MISSIONS AT HOME

October 2. The Divine Order

"But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

According to this instruction of Jesus it seems clear that missionary work should begin at home.

The early Christians so interpreted Jesus' words. The first part of the Book of Acts records the spreading of the Gospel in the city of Jerusalem and throughout Palestine. In spite of arrests, threatenings, and beatings by the non-Christian Jewish leaders, the Apostles persisted in preaching in Jerusalem, and thousands were added to the church.

Then we read of the Christians being scattered abroad as a result of the persecution following the stoning of Stephen. Philip went down to Samaria and preached the gospel there. And a little later we are told that the church was well established in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria.

It seems perfectly sound and logical that we should be deeply concerned about the people nearest at hand, the people in our own country, perhaps of our own race and kin. To them we owe a special responsibility.

Furthermore, for the successful prosecution of a missionary program abroad, we need a strong home base which is able to furnish the workers and the means for the enterprise.

There is both love and wisdom in the divine order.

Dear Savior, give us a deep concern for our own people. Help us to put forth real effort to bring them into Thy saving fellowship. Forbid that we should be indifferent to the spiritual destitution of people living at our very doors. Give us hearts of compassion, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

Fortieth Week: MISSIONS AT HOME

October 3. The American Problem

"Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah" (Ps. 33:12).

Church and state are separate in America. Of this doctrine we heartily approve. We would not have it otherwise. But the observance of this principle raises grave problems for the church. With no established church, there is no approved religion and no religious instruction of children and youth as a part of the program of the public schools.

Responsibility for religious instruction devolves therefore upon the home, the church, and the church school. These agencies have only very partially fulfilled their functions in this respect, so that there are literally millions of American youth who are growing up without one iota of religious instruction and without the slightest contact with the Christian church.

This constitutes a very grave problem. These people are growing up in a spiritual darkness in which they have absolutely no knowledge of the Savior who gave His life for them.

It is a serious problem for our country. Divine and human wisdom unite in the verdict that a nation without God cannot long endure. And if a large portion of our people are without true religion, they constitute a menace to the perpetuity of the state.

An aggressive program of Christian education is therefore an essential part of the home missionary program. It is of supreme importance for the individual, the church, and the state.

Dear God, Thou art Lord of the nations, help us to realize the seriousness of the problems that face our people and our country. Help us to seek wisdom, counsel, and courage from Thee in our endeavors as Christians to help solve these problems, to the glory of Thy name. Amen.

Fortieth Week: MISSIONS AT HOME

October 4. The Field

The Patriarch Jacob once sent forth his son Joseph with this commission: *"Go now, see whether it is well with thy brethren"* (Gen. 37:14).

What do we find as we inquire about our brethren in this country?

According to latest statistics, about 45% of our 120,000,000 people are outside of the church. This is a number almost equal to the population of the empire of Japan!

But what of our Lutheran stock? It is estimated that there are in our country over 10,000,000 people of originally Lutheran stock who are not members of the Lutheran church!

Evidently it is not well with our brethren.

Oh, what a home mission field in our land! Teeming unchurched millions in our great and growing cities! Vast rural areas and countless villages where no church work of any kind is being done!

Many of these unfortunate people have been so long away from God and the church that they are, to all intents and purposes, as much pagan as if they lived in the heart of Africa.

Many others have still in their hearts a longing for Christian guidance and fellowship, but there is no one at hand to minister to them.

But whatever their condition, they are all precious in the sight of God and the objects of His saving love.

Merciful Jesus, have pity upon our spiritually benighted countrymen. Stir up Thy church to a realization of its responsibility for bringing to fellowmen a saving knowledge of Thee. Wilt Thou rally Thy followers for enlarged efforts to reclaim the lost for Thee. Save our church and our country from being engulfed in a new heathenism. We beseech Thee for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

Fortieth Week: MISSIONS AT HOME

October 5. Methods of Work

"And he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46-47).

The Lord Jesus has given clear instruction as to the basic method in all missionary work. It is to present the crucified and risen Christ as Savior and forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Him for all repentant souls. This central aim all subsidiary plans and devices in missionary work must serve; otherwise it will fall far short of its highest purpose.

To get a hearing for this message, however, a multitude of means must be found. Methods vary in the city and in the country, in slum districts and in high class residence sections.

The home missionary often begins by making a survey of the field to learn whether or not the ground is already adequately covered by existing churches. If he finds that there is a real need for taking up work, he invites the people to a preaching service or gathers the children for a Sunday school. Perhaps he organizes a Ladies' Aid society.

But there is much personal work to be done in trying to interest the people who by long absence from the church have grown indifferent to their spiritual welfare. The heart of the true missionary yearns for these people, and he knows no greater joy than to see repentant souls come asking for forgiving grace.

O Jesus, we thank Thee for the blessed Gospel of hope. Bless every kind of effort to get a hearing for Thy saving word. Give to Thy servants wisdom, courage, tact, and abounding love. Help them to win souls for Thee. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Fortieth Week: MISSIONS AT HOME

October 6. Church Extension

"How amiable are thy tabernacles,
O Jehovah of hosts!
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah;
My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God"
(Ps. 84:1-2).

Everyone who has been brought up in vital contact with the church learns to love the house of God, and if he comes to live in a community without a church, he longs for the church with a more or less conscious desire.

For this reason, but also because of the compelling practical necessity of a meeting place, one of the first problems a home missionary faces is that of getting a church or chapel as a center of operation.

But the interested people are too few and often financially unable to build a church, and naturally much cannot be expected from those who are not interested. For these reasons church bodies have established Church Extension funds from which loans at a very low rate of interest may be made to home missionary congregations to assist them in getting a church building. When, later on, the congregation has grown stronger, the loan is returned and is put to use helping some other needy missionary group.

Funds given for this purpose go on, therefore, generation after generation, in their blessed service of building houses of worship for souls longing for the courts of the Lord.

Lord of the church, wilt Thou put it into the heart of many a one to give of Thy entrusted means to help build Thy tabernacles. Bless the gifts and bless the givers, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Fortieth Week: MISSIONS AT HOME

October 7. Does It Pay?

"The Lord added to them day by day those that were saved" (Acts 2:47).

Are there any fruits of home missionary work?

Well, it is estimated that nine-tenths of all protestant churches in America are the result of home missionary efforts. The experience of the church in Pentecostal days has been repeated over and over again.

Is it worth while?

Here is just one little story from the field.

"In my house to house canvass of a new community in Minneapolis I visited an unchurched home. The lady of the house became interested in our contemplated church work, because she had a little crippled boy, who, she felt, should be taught about God. Her own parents were divorced; her husband was an avowed atheist. But she got interested in our work, and assisted us for some time before I found out that she had not been baptized; she was about forty years old. But she was very willing to take a course of instruction—quite a thorough course also, because I felt she had leadership abilities, and should be properly instructed. I wanted her to become an informed Lutheran, but most of all I wanted to bring her to Christ. I baptized her and her little boy at a service attended by one of the Home Mission Board members. To this day this Home Mission Board member reminds me with tears in his eyes, of the impressiveness of that service.

"Some time ago my wife and I were made happy when this lady told us, 'I am an entirely different person now from what I was before your Church came to my home.' And her life bears out the truth of her statement; she works early and late for our church."

Does it pay?

Dear Lord, we thank Thee for the many precious souls saved through home missionary effort. Wilt Thou bless the work for increasing success, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Forty-First Week: MISSIONS ABROAD

October 8. The Inclusiveness of Christianity

The religion of which Christ is the center is meant to embrace all mankind. This is clearly foreshadowed even in the Old Testament. To Abraham the Lord said in His great Messianic promise: *"In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 12:3).

The psalmist sings:

"All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah;
And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee" (Ps. 22: 27).

The reign of the Messiah is set forth in these exalted words:

"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River unto the ends of the earth.
They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.
The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall render tribute: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him" (Ps. 72:8-11).

And the great prophet sees the time when *"the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea"* (Is. 11:9).

But it is in the New Testament period that the universality of Christianity appears in all its glory. The thought is present in practically every book of the New Testament. This passage is typical: *"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation"* (Mark 16:15).

There is not one soul in any region, in time past, present, and future, who is not included in the love-plan of God.

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

Grant this fulfilment, O God, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Forty-First Week: MISSIONS ABROAD

October 9. The Exclusiveness of Christianity

While the Bible clearly sets forth the thought that Christianity is intended for all men, it makes equally plain the tremendous truth that in Christ rests the only hope of salvation for men anywhere. This idea is freely challenged in many circles today. Even many Christians are prone to become dull in their perception of this truth and grow indifferent to their missionary responsibility. It is important, therefore, to be reminded of what God's word actually says on this point.

Language cannot make the truth clearer than Jesus' own words: *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6).

On trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin, Peter and John brought this testimony concerning Jesus Christ: *"And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12).

And Paul, writing to the Romans witnesses: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16).

Clearly the Bible presents Christ not merely as *a way*, but as *the way*. And why, pray, did God give His own Son, and why did Christ suffer untold anguish and die, the terrible death, if men could be saved without Him? No, there is no other way.

"Christ alone is our salvation,
Christ the rock on which we stand;
Other than this sure foundation
Will be found but sinking sand.
Christ, His cross and resurrection,
Is alone the sinner's plea;
At the throne of God's perfection
Nothing else can set him free."

Help us, Lord Jesus, to remember always that the world's only hope is in Thee. Amen.

Forty-First Week: MISSIONS ABROAD

October 10. The Great Commission

The exclusiveness, as well as the inclusiveness, of Christianity places a tremendous responsibility upon Christians to spread the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Savior Himself emphasized this responsibility by making it His parting commission to His disciples, in those unforgettable words: *"All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world"* (Matt. 28:18-20).

We stand with bowed heads in the presence of this divine charge. We feel our ideas expanding with the world sweep of Christ's vision; we sense the greatness of the Master's right to command; we realize somewhat the vastness of the task; we are comforted by the assurance of Christ's presence with us always, giving us strength for the enterprise of making Him known to all mankind.

In the presence of this holy commission no Christian can do as he pleases. Even if there were no other motivation for missionary work, this command alone would constitute the obedient Christian's unescapable obligation to carry on. Christ is our Captain; it is for us to obey orders.

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression
And rule in equity."

Lord, Jesus Christ, help us to exalt Thee by making Thy salvation known over all the earth. Amen.

Forty-First Week: MISSIONS ABROAD

October 11. The Need

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9).

From all over the non-Christian world there comes to Christians the Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us." And that non-Christian world is immensely large. Two-thirds of the world's population are outside of the Christian fold. There is in the world today a heathen soul for every minute that has passed since Christ died on Calvary's cross and made salvation possible. Think what the state of the heathen world means! Think of the ignorance, the superstition, the filth, the poverty, the diseases, the depravity of the many millions of these human beings!

But most of all the heart of the Christian is touched by their spiritual destitution. They know not the true God. They are ignorant of the fact that they have a Savior in Jesus Christ. In their spiritual blindness they are seeking in a thousand ways to find that peace of soul which every human being craves; but they do not succeed, for they do not know the way. All their prayers, offerings, fastings, pilgrimages, and self inflicted tortures bring them no rest, and death is faced with fear and dismay.

Christian friend, do not the needs of the non-Christian world melt your heart with compassion?

"Through midnight gloom from Macedon
The cry of myriads as of one,
The voiceful silence of despair,
Is eloquent in awful prayer,
The soul's exceeding bitter cry,
'Come o'er and help us, or we die.'"

Merciful Savior, touch our hearts with pity for the blinded souls who do not know Thee. Arouse Thy Christian church to a new sense of responsibility to send forth the message of Thy saving love. In Thy own name we pray. Amen.

October 12. Methods

How shall the non-Christian people in the world find out that they have a wonderful Savior in Jesus? Paul shows the way. *"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!"* (Rom. 10:13).

We cannot all go to the foreign mission fields, so we unite our prayers, our counsels, and our gifts, and send representatives to proclaim the good news of salvation. That is the basic idea in all missionary effort. Missionaries and evangelists travel and preach, distribute Christian literature, and talk personally with those who show some interest—all for the purpose of making Jesus known.

But there are also auxiliary ways in which the message is presented. Disease is a terrible scourge in non-Christian lands, and because medical skill there is woefully inadequate, Christian doctors are sent to heal and to cure, and thus a favorable reception for the gospel message is secured. Children are gathered into Christian schools where they are taught many useful things, but preeminently about Jesus. In every possible way Jesus is made known for the salvation of precious souls.

"Shall we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high—
Shall we, to men benighted,
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation, O Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till earth's remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name."

Dear Jesus, hasten the day when all mankind shall know Thee. Amen.

Forty-First Week: MISSIONS ABROAD

October 13. Remember the Missionaries

When we send out our representatives upon the mission fields, we should not forget them. They have great need of our loving thoughtfulness. They tell us that one of the hardest things they have to endure is the thought that perhaps the home folks have forgotten them. It is a fine practice of mission boards to publish birthdays of missionaries in order to stimulate the writing of letters to them. The missionaries need our intercession. They covet the strength and assurance which comes from the communion of saints in prayer for them.

This is the way Paul felt about it: *"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak"* (Eph. 6:17-20).

Dear Jesus, Thou who came as the Father's great Missionary, we pray Thee for our missionaries who have gone out in our stead. Bless them with a constant assurance of Thy love, Thy presence, and Thy supporting power. Give them wisdom and courage to speak the truth in love. Help them in times of discouragement to remember that their work is Thy cause. In times of danger teach them to trust in Thee. Open the minds and hearts of those to whom they speak, that Thy word of grace may not be resisted but be given entrance to do its saving work. And help us, O Lord, not to forget. We pray all in Thy blessed Savior name. Amen.

October 14. The Reflex of Missions

"Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

By the idea enunciated in this passage of Scripture Jesus did not mean to set up a selfish motive for benevolence. What He did was to give forceful expression to the cardinal principle, operative in God's kingdom, that sharing with others inevitably makes for fulness of life for ourselves. Not by grabbing but by giving do we grow truly rich.

This is true in a particularly forceful way in connection with doing missionary work. Again and again it has been found true that the church which is active in missionary effort enjoys spiritual prosperity and rich blessings at home. On the other hand, a church which consistently refuses or neglects to share the gospel with others is doomed to die from dry rot. An artist wanting to picture a dead church painted a cob-web over the missionary collection box.

A little thought makes it perfectly clear that participation in the missionary enterprise brings reflex blessings. For one thing, it is being obedient to the Lord's express command, and obedience always brings blessings with it. Furthermore, zeal and activity for the salvation of those far away makes us deeply concerned about our own spiritual welfare and of those near at hand.

Blessed Savior, help us to be busy about the affairs of Thy kingdom. By our work for Thee may we grow more and more eager and devoted to Thy saving program. Help us to realize the joy and satisfaction that comes from sharing with others Thy rich blessings that have become precious to us. Grant our prayer for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

Forty-Second Week: STEWARDSHIP

October 15. Not Owners, but Stewards

"And he said also unto the disciples, There was a certain rich man, who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he was wasting his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, What is this that I hear of thee? render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst be no longer steward" (Luke 16:1-2).

A condition absolutely essential to the right service of God is the sense of stewardship. We are not owners, but managers in our relation to God's entrusted goods and talents.

This truth is frequently set forth in the teachings of Jesus, and throughout the Bible.

"The earth is Jehovah's and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1).

Whatever we have, we owe to God. He has entrusted it to us for a time for us to take care of in the capacity of stewards. He Himself is the real owner.

For this stewardship we must some day render an account. And the standard by which we shall be tested is the quality of faithfulness. We cannot do with God's investment as we please. God expects returns in proportion to what He has entrusted to us.

It is not the amount we possess at the time of reckoning that determines our status with God, but the conscientiousness with which we have administered God's investments. God is absolutely fair. He will judge according to righteous principles. Whether such prospect of judging evokes from us fear or trust depends upon the character of our stewardship.

We thank Thee, our Lord and Maker, for what Thou hast given us. Give us a keen sense of responsibility in the husbanding of Thy trust. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Second Week: STEWARDSHIP

October 16. Our Abilities

"For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey. Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them" (Matt. 25:14-19).

For every capacity and ability we possess we stand in the relation of stewards to God from whom we have received them.

If we have received a strong body and a sturdy constitution, it is for us to care for that physical equipment in such a way that we shall be able to render to God and our fellowmen the largest service of which we are capable. No one has a right to abuse his body, no matter how strong he may be.

If we have received a capable mind, it is for us to utilize every opportunity for the development and training of that mind and to use it to the glory of God.

If we have the ability to sing, to speak, to teach, to lead, let us bear in mind that these qualities, too, are from God, and let us use them for the extension of His kingdom.

We have no right to waste our talents, whether they be five or one, nor to bury them. God will call us to account some day.

Help us, O Lord, to use our every ability for some good purpose, to the glory of Thy name. Save us from slothfulness, indolence, and the kind of ambition that centers in self. Make strong within us the sense of stewardship. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Second Week: STEWARDSHIP

October 17. Our Money

It is in regard to money that it seems most difficult for us to recognize our stewardship, and this is all the more serious for the wrong use of money has wrought untold havoc in the world.

The Lord in His word has a great deal to say about money, and one of the truths that He makes abundantly clear is just this principle of stewardship in regard to money.

To His servant Job God said: *"Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine"* (Job 41:11).

The truth that nothing we have is really our own is strikingly expressed by Paul: *"We brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out"* (1 Tim. 6:7).

And the utter folly of not recognizing our stewardship is set forth in a parable of Jesus: *"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou has prepared, whose shall they be? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God"* (Luke 12:16-21).

O God, help us that our money may not cause us to forget Thee, who art the Giver of all gifts. Help us to remember that our money really is Thine and that Thou dost hold us responsible for its right use. Grant that it may be to us not a curse, but a blessing. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Forty-Second Week: STEWARDSHIP

October 18. The Dangers of Money

God seems especially concerned about warning His children against the dangers of money. And when we observe the tremendous part that money plays in the world, we can well understand the necessity for such cautioning.

Here are some passages that deserve careful pondering.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19-21).

"And he that was sown among the thorns, this is he that heareth the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matt. 13:22).

"But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9-10).

The catalog of evils wrought by the wrong attitude to money is a long and terrible one. In order to get money men have oppressed one another to the point of death, brothers and sisters have become enemies for life, and countless souls have shriveled up and died. The foolish spending of money has sorrowed parents, ruined characters, and reduced many a one to direst poverty.

Our gracious Father in heaven, we thank Thee because Thou dost in love warn us against the dangers of money. Help us that it may not become our master and rob our hearts of Love to Thee. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Second Week: STEWARDSHIP

October 19. Giving

We are to use our money for those purposes which will contribute to our well-being in such a way that we can render efficient service in our various callings. But the Lord makes it perfectly clear that He expects us to give generously of our money for His work in the world.

In His Sermon on the Mount Jesus said: *"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away"* (Matt. 5:42).

Again He said: *"Freely ye received, freely give"* (Matt. 10:8).

To the rich young ruler Jesus gave this instruction: *"If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me"* (Matt. 19:21).

Paul advises: *"Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart, not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver"* (2 Cor. 9:7).

According to these and many other statements, it is clear that we are not to keep everything to ourselves, but freely and cheerfully to share with others. Whether we give directly to individual persons who are in need, or through organized work of benevolence, or to the church for the support of God's work, we are serving God with our money. It was Robert E. Speer who said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon, but ye can serve God with mammon."

"Teach us the lesson Thou has taught,
To feel for those Thy blood hath bought,
That every word and deed, and thought,
May work a work for Thee.

"In sickness, sorrow, want or care,
Whate'er it be, 'tis ours to share;
May we, where help is needed, there
Give help as unto Thee."

Amen.

Forty-Second Week. STEWARDSHIP

October 20. Extent of Giving

"How much should a person give?" This is a question many serious Christians ask.

Well, in Old Testament times God had a definite rule for giving. The people were required to give a tenth of their income to the Lord's work. *"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is Jehovah's: it is holy unto Jehovah. And all the tithe of the herd or the flock, whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto Jehovah"* (Lev. 27:30, 32).

In our New Testament dispensation God does not lay down specific rules for our giving, but surely He does not expect less of us than of people in former times. We have been far more richly blessed spiritually than they. We have a completed redemption, whereas they lived only in expectation. Jesus came and gave all for us; surely we should not after that supreme sacrifice reduce our gifts to the Lord.

Whether we strictly follow a tithing system or not, we certainly should follow the principle of giving according to ability. *"Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of Jehovah thy God which he hath given thee"* (Deut. 16:17). And again: *"To whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required"* (Luke 12:48).

Most people give shamefully little to the Lord. Christians in general spend far more for tobacco, candy, chewing gum, cosmetics, and the like than they give to all the Lord's work.

Is this a fair way to use the money God has entrusted to us? He has given to us everything we possess; we give back a mere pittance to Him. Many of us live in luxury, while others are starving, and still others are going into hopeless graves.

What shall we say when we are called to give an account of our stewardship?

God give us hearts to pity and to share, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Second Week: STEWARDSHIP

October 21. The Blessings of Giving

God has some wonderful things to say about the blessings of giving. In days of old the chief priest, Azariah, reported to king Hezekiah: *"Since the people began to bring the oblations into the house of Jehovah, we have eaten and had enough, and have left plenty: for Jehovah hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store"* (2 Chron. 31:10).

Jesus' words are familiar: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35). And: *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again"* (Luke 6:38).

Paul states the principle thus: *"He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully"* (2 Cor. 6:6).

Let us not therefore fear that we shall become poor by giving generously to the Lord's work. Many business men say that they can date the beginning of their prosperity from the time they began to give more largely to the Lord. But even if there were no material returns from our giving, we should have the joy and satisfaction of being obedient and of having a share in God's great program for blessing humanity. Working for the Lord and giving to His cause bring blessings far more real than anything we ever do directly for ourselves.

"Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to yield Thee,
Gladly, freely of Thine own;
With the sunshine of Thy goodness
Melt our thankless hearts of stone;
Till our cold and selfish natures,
Warmed by Thee, at length believe
That more happy and more blessed
'Tis to give than to receive."

Amen.

Forty-Third Week: CITIZENSHIP

October 22. A Double Allegiance

The Christian holds citizenship in two realms, the kingdom of God and the earthly state.

But there is no conflict between these loyalties. The enemies of Jesus tried to involve Him in difficulties on this point by putting to Him what they believed to be a very embarrassing question: *"Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why make ye trial of me, ye hypocrites? Show me the tribute money, and they brought unto him a denarius. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. And when they heard it, they marvelled, and went away"* (Matt. 22:17-22).

In His wonderful reply Jesus enunciated a principle that has served to guide Christians in their citizenship relations ever since. We receive good things both from God and the state. We therefore, also owe both of them certain obligations which it is incumbent upon us to perform. There is no conflict.

Sometimes in the history of Christianity the idea has gained currency that Christians should keep aloof from the secular affairs of the world. Monasticism has its roots in such a view. But such an attitude is clearly out of harmony with Jesus' teachings. Again and again He makes known the principle that His followers are to make effective impacts upon the life about them. The injunction to be "light" and "salt" in the world emphasizes this responsibility of Christians. They are not to be "of the world" but effective "in the world."

Dear Father in heaven, we pray Thee to help us to be faithful both to Thee and to our government. Help us to glorify Thee also by what we do as citizens of the earthly state. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Third Week: CITIZENSHIP

October 23. A Good Country

In commissioning Moses to lead his people out of Egypt the Lord made this declaration: *"I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey"* (Ex. 3:8).

What Canaan was to the people of Israel, America has been to millions of people in modern times. When we consider the vast extent of our country, its wonderful natural beauty, its amazing natural resources, its wide areas of fertile lands, its great variety of climates, we must say that it is truly a good land and large.

America has come to be regarded as "a promised land," offering a home and opportunities for larger living to millions of humanity in other lands who were struggling under conditions of economic hopelessness or under systems of religious or political oppression. Consequently they came to our shores from all lands and peopled our country with immigrants of substantial racial stocks and of aspiring ambitions for better things.

From colonial days our country has grown apace in extent of territory, in population, in wealth, and in influence in the councils of the nations. Surely the Lord has been good to us, and from our hearts there should arise the incense of gratitude to the Lord of the nations who has so signally blessed us throughout our national history.

"My country! 'tis of thee
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing:
Land where my fathers died!
Land of the pilgrims' pride!
From ev'ry mountain side
Let freedom ring!"

Dear Lord, make us truly grateful for our country. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Third Week: CITIZENSHIP

October 24. A Good Government

"The law of the wise is a fountain of life" (Prov. 13:14).

Not only do we Americans enjoy a land that is good in its natural qualities; we also have a good government.

It is of our own making. Our constitution was not imposed upon us by some external power. It was wrought out by the minds and hearts of capable and patriotic men, who passionately loved the ideals of self-government and who invoked God's blessings upon their epoch-making work. The original constitution and the subsequent amendments have become the law of the land by the effect of our own majority votes, freely registered.

And it is a wise and good law. To be sure there are those among us who feel called upon to point out constantly how inadequate and inefficient is our system of government as compared with that in certain other lands. But that our constitution with its checks and balances and its provisions for orderly modification is a good one is testified to by the amazing progress we have made under its provisions, by the manner in which severe crises have been weathered, by its adaptability to greatly changed conditions, and by the fact that the example of our venture in democracy has been followed by a host of peoples on the earth. Largely due to the influence of our government, the idea of self-determination is perhaps the most cogent force in the political thinking of the world today.

"My native country, thee,
Land of the noble-free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills:
My heart with rapture thrills
Like that above."

Lord, make us truly grateful for the political heritage we have received from the fathers. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Third Week: CITIZENSHIP

October 25. Liberty

"So speak ye, and so do, as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty" (James 2:12).

The basic idea upon which our government is built is the principle of liberty. Under the legal provisions of federal, state, and local units the greatest possible amount of freedom is allowed. We have freedom to move about at will, to engage in a multitude of vocations, to speak our minds, to express our opinions through the press, to buy and sell, to own land, and to make contracts.

A special form of liberty is that of expressing our convictions and ideas by voting for candidates for office and for or against provisions referred to the people.

Another valuable form of liberty is the right to educate our children in accordance with our convictions.

But perhaps the most highly priced form of liberty is freedom of worship. Religious oppressions in the home lands was one of the most powerful factors operative in the early coming of people to America and in the settlement of the colonies. And when time came to formulate governmental provisions under which to live, the right to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience was embodied in the basic law of the land.

"Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees
Sweet freedom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break,
The sound prolong."

Make us truly appreciative of our liberties, O Lord. Especially do we thank Thee for freedom to worship Thee. Amen.

Forty-Third Week: CITIZENSHIP

October 26. Law

The liberties of the American citizen extend just so far as they do not interfere with the liberties of other citizens. To define and regulate this relationship in our liberties is essentially the purpose of human laws.

The apostle Paul clearly stated the evangelical principle of liberty upon which right human relations are founded when he wrote: *"For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another. For the whole* law *is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love* thy *neighbor as thyself"* (Gal. 5:13-14).

No well behaved individual has anything to fear from the law, as Paul also said: "Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly." If all men were governed in their conduct by the principle of brotherly love, there would be no need of law; but because certain men and women would interfere with the life, property, or other rights of fellow citizens, laws are necessary.

"Liberty under law" is therefore a principle essential to happy human relationships. It is a God-appointed principle.

Every right-minded citizen will support all the laws of his country as a condition for ordered government. Disrespect for one law breeds disrespect for others, and the final result of non-observance would be anarchy.

"Our father's God to Thee,
Author of liberty,
To Thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God, our King."

Amen.

Forty-Third Week: CITIZENSHIP

October 27. The Franchise

"Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:7).

Citizenship involves certain obligations. Patriotic devotion, obedience to law, respect for magistrates, and payment of taxes are all duties which the Christian citizen will cheerfully perform in return for the rights and protection which he, under God, enjoys through his government.

In America, the privilege of popular franchise involves special obligations. It is the plain duty of every American citizen to inform himself, or herself, about candidates for office, so that it may be known what they stand for, and to study measures to be voted on, so that it may be known what they involve, and then on election day to go to the polls and register one's vote conscientiously.

Neglect on the part of many good people in interesting themselves in political matters and failure to vote have often resulted in the triumph of selfish and unscrupulous persons who have turned government to their own uses. Such indifferent and neglectful citizens are largely responsible for bad government.

Divine and human law require faithfulness in the performance of citizenship duties.

"God bless our native land!
Firm may she ever stand,
Through storm and night;
When the wild tempests rave,
Ruler of wind and wave,
Do Thou our country save
By Thy great might."

Amen.

Forty-Third Week: CITIZENSHIP

October 28. Prayer for Our Country

Among the services which the Christian citizen will render to his country is that of praying for it and for the men and women who are elected to serve in office. This the Lord through His servant enjoins upon us: *"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity"* (1 Tim. 2:1-2).

The church has recognized this privilege and obligation and has embodied in its formal prayers petitions for blessings upon the land and all in authority. At times, too, special days of prayer have been designated, on which Christians have gathered in their churches to appeal to the God of nations for help and guidance.

Individual Christians, too, should pray for their country in times of peace, as well as in times of war. The President and others in responsible positions need the sustaining power of Christians in prayer. The temptations to unfaithfulness and dishonesty are often great, the problems are many and difficult, the enemies of righteousness are powerful and active; surely our designated officials need to have their hands sustained by our help in prayer.

And certainly there would be far more faithfulness in our citizenship if there were more prayers for our country. So let us resolve:

"For her our prayer shall rise
To God above the skies;
On Him we wait:
Thou who art ever nigh,
Guarding with watchful eye,
To Thee aloud we cry,
God save the state!"

Amen.

Forty-Fourth Week: THE BREVITY OF LIFE

October 29. A Stern Reality

The right investment of our time, our energy, our talents, our money is of superlative importance because of the brevity of life.

In multiplied imagery Moses has portrayed the transitory character of the life of men.

"Thou carriest them away as with a flood: they are as a sleep;
In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.
In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up;
In the evening it is cut down, and withereth" (Ps. 90:5-6).

A flood, a sleep, a blade of grass—these are the pictures which Moses employs to set forth the shortness of life.

We face here a stern reality. Whether we like it or not, we must admit that the life span covers but a brief period. Even if we live out our three score and ten years, life is but a fleeting shadow as compared with the endless cycles of eternity.

It is not an evidence of morbidness to consider this fact. It is a plain common sense facing of reality, and it is a part of wisdom so to do.

Many people act as if they expect to live here forever, and then the summons comes, and they must leave everything and go, whether ready or not. Is it not extremely foolish to blind oneself to the fleeting character of one's life?

God, our Father, help us to realize that we shall not be here forever. Let us not become so tied to the things of earth that we lose sight of that great Fatherland for which we are made. Help us so to order the affairs of our lives in harmony with Thy will that this brief span may be linked up with the blessed realities of eternity. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

Forty-Fourth Week: THE BREVITY OF LIFE

October 30. Uncertainties

Life is short even if lived out over the normal period. But we have absolutely no assurance that our lives shall be so lived. Nothing is more impressive than the uncertainties of life. The apostle James puts this fact into words that arrest the attention of even the careless reader: *"Come now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"* (James 4:13-14).

A man in the full strength of his manhood prides himself on the good state of his health, and then suddenly is stricken with a disease which in a week's time lays him low.

A father goes forth in the morning to work, and before the day is over, he is brought home cold in death.

A car-full of young people starts out on a holiday excursion, and at a railway crossing they are hurled into eternity.

A tornado, a fire, a shipwreck, an earthquake, a volcanic eruption—and thousands of lives are snuffed out.

These are not vaporings of an overwrought imagination. They are stubborn facts, almost commonplaces, in the story of human existence.

It is the part of wisdom to take account of the uncertainties of life.

"Who knows how near my life's expended?
Time flies, and death is hasting on,
How soon, my term of trial ended,
Death may be here and life be gone.
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Thy peace may bless my dying day."

Yes, dear Lord, may Thy summons not come to me unprepared. Grant us grace to be always ready to meet our Lord. Amen.

Forty-Fourth Week: THE BREVITY OF LIFE

October 31. An Encouragement to Thoughtfulness

Having considered how short life is, Moses is moved to pray:

"So teach us to number our days,
That we may get us a heart of wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

Certainly a consideration of the brevity and uncertainty of life should move us to thoughtfulness.

Moses' expression, "to number our days," is colorful. Have we not all, when we have had a lot of things to do, counted the days in which we have had to get certain tasks accomplished. Every day seemed very precious; we could not afford to waste a single one, or even a part of one. We felt that we must make every minute count.

A consideration of the shortness of life weights every day with vast significance. It emphasizes to us the Lord's work and the shortness of the time in which to do it.

Thoughtless men apparently do not see the Lord's work or are unwilling to do it. Consequently they waste their time or even seek out new and unusual ways in which to make the time pass.

To "kill time"—is not that a terrible thing to do!

Moses prays for a heart of wisdom—to understand the preciousness of time and to use it in such a way as to further his own true interests and to glorify his Maker. Counting the days is a very wise and useful exercise.

Dear Father, teach us to know that our days are gifts from Thee. Make us thoughtful of their use, to the end that Thy name may be honored. Let the morning of each new day summon us to a consideration of how we may live wisely. Give us grace to understand that the supreme purpose of our earthly existence is to fit us for Thy eternal service. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Fourth Week: THE BREVITY OF LIFE

November 1. A Thought to Stimulate Us in Our Life Work

"Oh, remember how short my time is:
For what vanity hast thou created all the children of men!"
(Ps. 89:47).

Since life is short and uncertain, it is imperative that we exercise great wisdom in our choices and in our labors.

If we had an unlimited length of time at our disposal, we might experiment a great deal. It would not be so serious if we made a number of mistakes. We could make a new start.

But since our days are so limited, we must make every effort to avoid waste, by trying to discover the line of effort for which the Lord has especially endowed us and to which He calls us. It is supremely important that our few days are spent in harmony with His plans.

And having reached a decision on the main question of our life work, there still remains the necessity of the daily decision as to what is worth while. Oh, how much time is frittered away without a single result of consequence to show for it; time spent that means nothing whatsoever in the way of helpful relaxation or constructive achievement; yes, worse—time spent in positively harmful ways, which reduce our physical, mental, or moral efficiency.

To consider the brevity of life is to encircle every hour of the day with a halo of sacredness because given as a trust from God.

Heavenly Father, bless Thy children every day. Help us to begin each day with a high sense of responsibility for the gift of time. Help us to fill every hour with things worth while. Let all our years and all our days be lived in the hallowing consciousness of spending ourselves in fruitful service to Thee and our fellowmen. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Forty-Fourth Week: THE BREVITY OF LIFE

November 2. Linking Up with Eternity

Out of the contemplation of the transitoriness of life there arises in the heart of Moses a longing to link up the efforts of his career with something that will give to his labors enduring significance. And so he brings his song to a close with this aspiring prayer:

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants,
And thy glory upon their children.
And let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us;
And establish thou the work of our hands upon us;
Yea, the work of our hands establish thou it"
(Ps. 90:16-17).

Who has not experienced with piercing pain the thought that the totality of one's life work might be to no purpose—a whole life spent in effort that disappears without a trace before the breath of time, as dew before the morning sun.

The only way in which to escape such an experience, the only guarantee for the quality of permanence in our work is to link it up with the eternal purposes of God.

God's work only endures. All the work of man's hands unrelated to God's great plans shall crumble in ruin, but the great temple of God, built of the souls of redeemed men, shall continue to shine forth in eternal splendor.

If we would guarantee the permanence of our life efforts, we must tie them up to God. We must so relate our plans, our ambitions, our labors to His purposes that we can sincerely pray Moses' prayer: "Establish Thou the work of our hands."

Eternal and merciful God, teach us to work in harmony with Thy will that our labors may be established forever. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Fourth Week: THE BREVITY OF LIFE

November 3. A Thought to Comfort Us in Adversity

The thought of the brevity of life is a source of comfort in times of adversity. Paul was impressed by this idea. He says: *"For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal"* (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

When suffering comes, or hardship, or persecution, we may find solace in the thought that these things shall not last forever. Just a few brief days or years and we stand at the edge of that little segment of time that constitutes our life-span. This gives us strength to bear hardship with patience, to suffer pain with fortitude, to endure hard things in a spirit of triumphant courage.

On one side of the entrance to the Milan cathedral there is chiseled out a cluster of roses with the inscription, "Things that please last but for a moment." On the other side is a crown of thorns, with the words, "Things that pain last but for a moment." But across the portal, between the two, is inscribed the single word, "Eternity."

"A few more storms shall beat
On this wild, rocky shore,
And we shall be where tempests cease,
And surges swell no more.
A few more struggles here,
A few more partings o'er,
A few more toils, a few more tears,
And we shall weep no more."

We thank Thee, eternal Father, for the knowledge that hard things shall pass away. Help us to rest in Thee through Jesus Christ. Amen.

November 4. Preparedness

"Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12).

The true wisdom which comes from a consideration of the brevity and uncertainty of life teaches us to be always ready to go when the summons comes.

This means that we live constantly in fellowship with our Savior, Jesus Christ, by a personal and a vital faith. It means that we begin each day in His name, that we walk with Him throughout the busy hours, and that, when evening comes, we commit ourselves into His care and keeping. It means that we look to Him, and Him only, for the forgiveness of our sins and for the eternal life which shall carry us on past the limits of time into God's own eternity.

To those who thus live with Christ, every day will come as a trust from God to be spent in His service, and to such the thought of life's ending will not bring a sensation of dread, as it does to unprepared souls. Rather the thought of moving on fills the soul with the exaltation of a great expectation.

To the consecrated, consistent Christian all the days of life, few or many, are full of significance; and the Master's invitation to move up higher comes to him charged with deep and joyous meaning. Someone has said: "Plan as if you were to live here forever; live as if you were to die tomorrow."

How blessed to be always ready!

"Sun of my soul, Thou Savior dear,
It is not night if Thou be near;
Oh, may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes.

"Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die."

Amen.

Forty-Fifth Week: HOPE

November 5. The Role of Hope

"Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three" (1 Cor. 13:13).

The apostle Paul here classified hope as one of the three outstanding Christian virtues. And when we come to think about it, we see that hope does play an enormously important role in life.

Fond parents envelop the newly born babe in a cluster of hopes—hope for health, hope for normal growth and development, hope for a successful career that shall bring joy and blessing to every one.

The student applies himself assiduously to his books, firmly expecting that there will be a place for him and a work for him to do when he has completed his years of preparation.

The youth dreams of the day when with his beloved chosen one he can set up his happy home.

The farmer plows, and harrows, and sows in hope. He may often have been disappointed with past harvests, but he begins again with cheerful expectation.

The merchant lays in a big stock of goods, looking hopefully forward to a good season.

And when the sun of life has past its meridian and the shadows begin to lengthen, the heart of man looks longingly to the lands across the river.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast."

Our loving Father, we thank Thee for the gift of hope. Help us that we may always have the forward look. Help us to trust in Thee. Grant us grace to believe that Thou wilt minister good to us and to our loved ones. Even when we cannot see the way ahead of us, wilt Thou plant in our hearts a firm confidence in Thy Father love. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Fifth Week: HOPE

November 6. The Meaning of the Christian Hope

There is a kind of hope which all men normally possess; but there is also a unique hope which Christians alone can hold.

This hope means something in life and much in the hour of death. What hope means in discouraging times in life is well expressed by the Psalmist:

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the help of my countenance, and my God"
(Ps. 42:11).

The Christian trusts in the wisdom, the power, and the love of God. No matter how heavy the clouds of affliction at any time may be, or how unpromising a situation looks, the Christian believes in the ultimate triumph of God and righteousness, and by this hope he is buoyed up.

One who has sensed the meaning of hope speaks as follows: "Hope does not soon abandon that which does not promise well; it makes the most of littles; it fans the spark into a flame; it reflects a rainbow against the darkest cloud; it pictures tomorrow brighter than today. Hope has something to offset every discouragement. It gathers the sunbeams from near and far and causes them to shine upon the pathway. It rings a bell of gladness in the dull ears of those who are struggling in the valley, weighed down by their crosses, so that like Christ, for the joy that is set before them, they endure the cross and despise the shame."

"Why art thou cast down, my soul?
Oh, what mean thy sighs and sadness?
Trust in Him who makes thee whole,
And thy griefs can turn to gladness,—
Often in the darkest hour
He reveals His love and power."

Dear Jesus, give us a steadying hope, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Forty-Fifth Week: HOPE

November 7. The Tragedy of Hopelessness

"My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,
And are spent without hope.
Oh, remember that my life is a breath:
Mine eye shall no more see good"

(Job 7:6-7).

What a picture of a man's soul is this!

Job had been rich, healthy, and the possessor of a large and happy family. Then came disasters one on top of the other. For a while Job was patient and hopeful. But the testing was too much for him. The sun of good things for him seemed to have set, he could see nothing to look forward to, and he came to the extremity where he cursed the day on which he was born.

What a tragedy!

And yet has not this experience been repeated over and over again in other lives?

A bank fails, the earnings of a life time are swept away, and a dreadful gloom settles down upon the stricken family. Yes, many a man in such a situation has not the courage to face the future; so takes his own life.

A hailstorm thunders down upon a community, and men go about without a heart to carry on.

A beloved child sickens and dies, and the bereaved parents can see nothing more to live for.

Thus it is when hope has fled.

Merciful Father, save us from hopelessness. Let not adversity become too great for us. No matter what experiences meet us in life, may hope never leave us. Help us to believe that Thou art still God and our loving Father. Give us courage to face the future with the faith that all things work together for good to them that love Thee. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

November 8. Hope in the Hour of Death

Hope is exceedingly valuable in life, but it is supremely significant in the hour of death. Speaking of the imparting of the blessings in Christ Jesus, Paul says that it is all to this purpose, *"that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life"* (Titus 3:7).

This, the hope of eternal life, is the great strength and comfort of the Christian believer. The future is not uncertain to him. He accepts in faith the revelations that God has given of the life beyond the grave.

When life's short day comes to a close and the time of dissolution draws near, the Christian's hope opens up to him the vistas of eternal life. While here he has struggled much with his sins and doubts, he awaits his victorious deliverance into the presence of God. While here he may have experienced much of tribulation and pain, he looks forward hopefully to that blessed experience when tears shall be no more. While here he may have suffered misunderstanding and persecution, he looks expectantly to that state where enemies shall no more torment him. While here he may have witnessed much of wrong and injustice, he anticipates the realm where peace, love, and righteousness reign. While here he has seen Jesus in faith only, he longs with joy for the experience of seeing Him face to face.

"Confiding in Thy sacred word,
Our Savior is our hope, O Lord,
The guiding star before us;
Our Shepherd, leading us the way,
If from Thy paths our footsteps stray,
To Thee He will restore us:
Holy, Holy, ever hear us,
And receive us, while we gather
Round Thy throne, Almighty Father."

Amen.

Forty-Fifth Week: HOPE

November 9. A Contrast with the Heathen World

Writing to the Ephesian Christians, Paul reminds them of their former state when they were separate from Christ, *"having no hope and without God in the world"* (Eph. 2:12).

It is impossible for us who have been brought up from childhood with a faith in a future life with God to realize what it means to be without such a hope.

Henry Howard, of the Inland South American Mission, after telling of the death of an Indian's babe, says, "The next morning I went to perform the last rites over the little body, and as I took my place among the saddened and silent group on the hallowed knoll, where hoes, axes, knives and crosses mark the last resting places of those who have passed into the unknown, I saw the blessedness of the gospel, and realized the need of it more than ever before. The people of our party, the Lord's people, were calm and silent, but close by there were mothers who had laid their loved ones to rest and who as yet knew not Christ, 'The Resurrection and the Life.' I shall never forget the scene. They leaped into the air like animals that had received a mortal wound, and with cries of anguish and baffled despair, fell again with all their weight on the graves of their dead. These actions they repeated until they fell exhausted, and they lay with their faces to the ground, beating it with their hands, as though seeking in vain to hear voices now silent forever. I cannot describe the emotion that shook me, but God gave me power as I spoke of the hope so sure and certain in Christ, our blessed Redeemer."

Merciful Savior, we thank Thee for the Christian hope. Touch our hearts with pity for those who are in ignorance of Thee and Thy promise of the resurrection. Make us zealous to impart the hope of eternal life. We pray in Thy own blessed name. Amen.

Forty-Fifth Week: HOPE

November 10. The Ground of Our Hope

The Christian hope is built on a sure foundation. Paul speaks of the mystery of God manifested to His saints, *"to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col. 1:27).

The Christian is certain of his ground. He builds upon Christ Himself as the hope of his salvation—upon that Christ with whom are connected all the rich promises of grace and eternal life. He is not left to mere unfounded aspiration or expectations. He founds his hope upon the eternal rock which shall stand amid all the shiftings of time.

"Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as, 'I imagine so,' or 'It is likely'; but upon the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity; our salvation is fastened with God's own hand, and Christ's own strength, to the strong stake of God's unchangeable nature."

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

"His oath, His covenant, and blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand."

Grant me, Lord, such a sure hope, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Fifth Week: HOPE

(Special Meditation for Armistice Day on Page 368)

November 11. Hope the Dispeller of Sorrow

In the presence of sorrow over the loss of dear ones the Christian hope brings wonderful consolation. We listen with gratitude to the blessed words: *"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him"* (1 Thess. 4:13-14).

The severance of loving human ties constitutes one of the most painful experiences in life. When we have lived long together and learned to know one another, when we have worked and played, laughed and wept together, when we have stood side by side in defeat as well as in victory, when we have helped one another in times of temptation and of conflict, when we have really learned to love one another, the heart strings have been twined together and their parting causes piercing pain.

The experience would be almost unbearable where it not for the surely grounded hope Christians have that the loved ones have gone to be with God and that the broken circle will some day be reunited. This hope breaks the clouds of sorrow and permits the sunshine of God's love to shine within the heart. Thus is given courage to those who are left behind to continue on along God's appointed course.

"Jesus Christ, my sure defense
And my Savior, ever liveth;
Knowing this, my confidence
Rests upon the hope it giveth,
Though the night of death be fraught
Still with many an anxious thought."

Dear Jesus, give us a steadfast hope that shall light up the day of sorrow. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

Forty-Sixth Week: DEATH

November 12. An Unwelcome Topic

It is considered bad form in many circles to mention the subject of death. It is contended that such a reference has the effect of bringing gloom upon a group and of spoiling their fun.

Certainly it is not always in order to speak of death. *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to weep, and a time to laugh"* (Eccl. 3:1, 2, 4).

But there are some people who never want to hear about death, and the basic reason is that they are afraid to die.

Perhaps no man ever stood in worse dread of death than the late Alfred Krupp, of Prussia, the great cannon king, who was literally a manufacturer of death. "He never forgave any one who spoke to him of dying. Every employee throughout his vast works was strictly forbidden to refer to the subject of death in conversation. He fled from his own home when a relative of his wife suddenly died there, and when Mrs. Krupp remonstrated, he became so enraged that a lifelong separation ensued. At his last sickness he offered his physician a million dollars if he would prolong his life ten years."

How strikingly such an attitude illustrates the statement of the inspired writer in speaking of men who *"Through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage"* (Heb. 2:15).

How tragic the case of men who thus live in constant dread of death.

Lord our God, the Giver and Taker of life, save us from the fear of death. Help us to so believe and so live that death shall have no terror for us. Grant this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Forty-Sixth Week: DEATH

November 13. A Consequence of Sin

"Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men for that all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

It was not God's thought that men should die. He created them for life. While it is perhaps useless to speculate on what would have happened if man had not sinned, it seems reasonable to think that after men had spent on earth a time of trial, testing, and preparation, they would have been translated into a still more glorious existence where temptation would no longer have any effect upon them.

But, we well know, that man did sin, and in accordance with the Lord's declaration, death came upon him. And since the Fall, death has had a universal grip upon the race.

It is impossible to measure the pain, the tragedies, the sorrow, the anguish that have followed in the wake of death. Jesus Himself seems to have sensed the awfulness of the scourge as He stood before the grave of Lazarus: *"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who come with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. The Jews therefore said, Behold how he loved him! But some of them said, Could not this man, who opened the eyes of him that was blind, have caused that this man also should not die? Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the tomb"* (John 11:33-38).

O God, our Lord, we stand with awe in the presence of Thy judgments. Help us to realize the awfulness of sin, to hate it with all our hearts, and to be delivered from the dread of death. Help us to be so vitally united with the Lord of life that though temporal death comes to us, eternal death shall have no dominion over us. Grant this for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Forty-Sixth Week: DEATH

November 14. Death for the Christian an Entrance into Rest

Death to the unbeliever is indeed a terrible thing; it means the end of his period of grace and the eternal loss of his soul. But for the Christian the terrors of death have been taken away. This is the exalted revelation given to John: *"And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them"* (Rev. 14:13).

Rest is sweet to the weary traveler. When the day is done and the journey at an end, one may lie down to sleep and pleasant dreams. What a tremendous difference it makes when the Christian may look upon death as an entrance into eternal rest.

There is a beautiful legend of a saint of the olden time who dreamed that Death came to him as he lay on his couch. The visitor struck terror to his soul, for he came in the dark garb of a monk; in his hand he held the scythe, and beneath the cowl a skeleton grinned. But, looking longer, behold! the dark habiliments began to melt away in glowing light; the scythe was transformed into a palm of victory; the skeleton vanished into air, and in its place stood a beautiful angel, robed in resplendent glory and smiling with joy, as he said to the saint, "Oh, child of God, I am Death. You see me in your human fears as a dark and terrible foe, but in reality I am thy friend, and I come as God's messenger to lead thee home."

"O Jesus! King most wonderful,
Thou Conqueror renowned;
Thou Sweetness most ineffable,
In whom all joys are found!

"When once Thou visitest the heart,
Then truth begins to shine:
Then earthly vanities depart,
Then kindles love divine."

Lord, grant us such faith, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Forty-Sixth Week: DEATH

November 15. Entrance into Life

While death for the Christian may well be spoken of as entrance into rest, that does not necessarily mean a state of eternal quietude and inactivity. It is rest from temptation, sin, and struggle; but it is not a cessation from praising and serving God.

God's word is full of the thought of life in connection with the Christian's death. *"The righteous shall enter into eternal life"* (Matt. 25:46). *"This is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal"* (1 John 2:25).

Victor Hugo said, in his old age: "When I go down to the grave, I can say, like so many others, 'I have finished my day's work,' but I cannot say, 'I have finished my life.' My day's work will begin the next morning. My tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare; it closes with the twilight to open with the dawn."

There is something in all of us that clings to the idea of life. We shrink from the thought of extinction. We want to go on. And in the eternal life, which is promised us in Christ, we not only can go on, but we enter upon the perfect life, free from all the limitations that hamper existence on earth.

Blessed prospect to live forever with the saved of God in His gracious presence!

"To Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, I will
With arms outstretched betake me;
I sleep in Thee—so sound—so still,
No mortal man can wake me!
For Jesus Christ, God's Son, I wait
To open me the heavenly gate,
Which leads to life eternal."

Amen.

Forty-Sixth Week: DEATH

November 16. A Glorious Victory

Setting forth the Christian's triumphant assurance in the presence of death, Paul exclaims: *"O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore,* ***my beloved brethren,*** *be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord"* (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

What a wonderful thing it is to be able to face death with such a spirit—not a going down to defeat, but a winning of a glorious victory through Christ!

Spurgeon relates the following:

"When we returned from Italy some years ago, the Mont Cenis Tunnel was newly opened, and we reckoned that it must be a dreary passage. We thought it must be very dark, and therefore we had better be provided with a candle. It would be damp and close, and therefore we reckoned upon closing every window, for fear we should breathe the impure air. So we speculated; but when we traversed that wonderful passage the carriages were well lighted, and much of the tunnel also, and we sat with open windows, finding it as easy to breathe as on the mountain's side. It was a joy rather than a peril to pass through the dreaded tunnel. So shall the voyager along the good old way find that death is not what he dreams. Jesus will light the darksome way, and the soul will need no candle of earth; fresh breezes from glory shall drive away the death-damps, and the music of angels shall make the heart forgetful of all pains. How can the good old way lead into danger? What can it conduct us to but eternal rest?"

Lord Jesus, give us such a triumphant death, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Forty-Sixth Week: DEATH

November 17. The State of the Dead

Many people wonder a great deal about what will be the state of the dead until the day of resurrection. The Lord has not seen fit to reveal to us very much about this state, and it is not wise to be dogmatic about it. Certain things, however, seem clear from the glimpses which God has given us.

It would seem that the souls of the departed are in a conscious state. In Christ's parable of the "Rich Man and Lazarus" we read: *"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and that he was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom: and the rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things: but now here he is comforted, and thou art in anguish"* (Luke 16:22-25).

According to these words, the unbelieving dead are in a state of conscious pain and anguish, while the believers are blessed and happy. The same idea is present in Jesus' words to the repentant thief on the cross: *"Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise"* (Luke 23:43).

It would seem therefore perfectly in order to think of the souls of the blessed dead as being at home in heaven with God.

> "Oh Christ, our souls' Maker and Lover,
> When time and earth's travail are over,
> Thou closest the grave's mournful story,
> And callest Thine own to Thy glory."

Grant me, O Lord, a blessed going home in Jesus' name. Amen.

Forty-Sixth Week: DEATH

November 18. Our Graves Hallowed

"And when even was come, there came a rich man from Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: this man went to Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded it to be given up. And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed" (Matt. 27:57-60).

In our explanation of the Catechism the question is asked: "What comfort do we derive from Christ's burial?" And the answer is given: "He has buried our sins, hallowed our graves, and taken away their ghastliness."

What a comfort it is to know that Jesus has gone before us also into the grave. Where He has shown the way, we need not fear to tread.

For the Christian the grave is, therefore, not an object of fear, but an emblem of release from sin and conflict and of entrance into the joy of the Lord.

And so when my course is run and the time for moving on comes to me, I may trustingly commit myself to my Good Shepherd's care:

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"

(Ps. 23:4).

"Go and let my grave be made—
Tired and weary now with straying,
Farewell to the earth I've said,
Heaven's call to peace obeying:
Calls me now the happy rest
Of the angels ever blest."

When this life is over, Dear Jesus, help me to see Thy hallowed presence in the grave, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

Forty-Seventh Week: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

November 19. Its Certainty

There are many things we do not know about the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. God has chosen to reveal some facts to us but not all things clearly.

In a devotional consideration of this subject it is not profitable to enter into a discussion of disputed questions. Let the Bible speak for itself, and let us pray God for wisdom to learn for our Christian lives the valuable lessons which this subject brings before us.

The first fact that God has made known to us is the certainty of Christ's return. The Bible, especially the New Testament, is filled with references to the Second Advent. One of the most definite declarations is that made in connection with Christ's ascension. We read: *"They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven"* (Acts 1:6-11).

Dear Jesus, our resurrected Lord, we thank Thee because Thy return to earth has been so clearly foretold. Help us that these revelations may strengthen our faith in Thee and steady us day by day in our Christian living. We pray in Thy own name. Amen.

Forty-Seventh Week: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

November 20. Signs of His Coming

The entire twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel is occupied with Jesus' own teachings about the last times. Let portions of this chapter form the basis of our prayerful meditations for some days this week.

"And as he sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail. Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied the love of the many shall wax cold. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:3-14).

Help us, O Lord, in reverence to receive Thy revelations. Grant that we may not be led astray by false teachers but stand in Thy light. Save us from fruitless speculations and computations, but let the thought of Thy coming sober us and comfort us. We pray in Thy name. Amen.

Forty-Seventh Week: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

November 21. The Great Tribulation

"When therefore ye see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let him that readeth understand), then let them that are in Judaea flee unto the mountains: let him that is on the housetop not go down to take out the things that are in his house: and let him that is in the field not return back to take his cloak. But woe unto them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days! And pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a sabbath: for then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would have been saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or, Here; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; go not forth: behold, he is in the inner chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together" (Matt. 24:15-28).

O Lord, have pity upon Thy people in the coming days of tribulation. Help them above all to cling to Thee by an enduring faith. Help us to live so closely in fellowship with Thee that when testings come to us, we shall be strong in our faith and steadfast in our purposes to glorify Thee by our faithfulness. Grant this for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

Forty-Seventh Week: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

November 22. The Time Unknown

"But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:29-31).

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only. And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field; one is taken, and one is left: two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:35-44).

We pray Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, that we may be always ready for Thy coming. Hold us always close to Thee in faith, for Thy love's sake. Amen.

Forty-Seventh Week: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

November 23. The Reign of Anti-Christ

"Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise; for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know that which restraineth, to the end that he may be revealed in his own season. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that restraineth now, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming; even he, whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God sendeth them a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thes. 2:1-12).

Merciful Lord, help us that we may not reject Thy truth and thus bring judgment upon ourselves. Save us from the folly and curse of unbelief. Let our faith be so steadfastly fixed upon Thee that no threats or wiles of Satan and his hosts shall have power over us. Give us abundantly of Thy power, through Christ. Amen.

Forty-Seventh Week: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

November 24. What It Will Mean

The return of Christ will mean vastly different things to different people.

To the wicked and unbelieving it will be a day of terror and despair. *"And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot; they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed"* (Luke 17:26-30).

For the believing faithful, however, the coming of the Lord will be welcomed as a day of joy and deliverance for the much tried people of God. *"And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh"* (Luke 21:27-28).

The varying attitudes of men to Christ account for the differences in their thought of His coming. To the unbelieving the thought of the return of Christ brings nothing but unmitigated terror and dismay. To the believer, however, the event brings the expectation of a joyous experience.

Dear Lord, Jesus Christ, we pray Thee that we may live so vitally in fellowship with Thee that the thought of Thy coming shall not cause us fear but rather give us great joy. Give us a steadfast longing for Thy gracious presence. We ask in Thy own name. Amen.

Forty-Seventh Week: THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

November 25. The Need of Patience and Watchfulness

Meditate on these words of the venerable Peter:

"But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace; without spot and blameless in his sight. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:8-18).

Lord, teach us the wisdom of patience and watchfulness in our waiting for Christ. We pray in His name. Amen.

Forty-Eighth Week: THE RESURRECTION

November 26. Christ's Teaching Concerning the Resurrection

One of the most precious elements in the Christian's hope is the expectation of his resurrection to glory. In many a time of wasting sickness, in heavy grief over the loss of dear ones, he longs for the time when sickness and death shall be no more.

Our hope of the resurrection is solidly grounded in the word of God. Jesus spoke of it in connection with the raising of Lazarus from the dead. *"Martha therefore said unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die"* (John 11:21-26).

What words of divine authority and assurance are these! How many a time they have brought light and comfort when darkening sorrow has settled down upon bereaved hearts! How blessed to hear Jesus speak the promise of life!

"I know of a sleep in Jesus' name,
A rest from all toil and sorrow;
Earth folds in her arms my weary frame,
And shelters it till the morrow;
My soul is at home with God in heaven,
Her sorrows are past and over.

"I know of a morning bright and fair,
When tidings of joy shall wake us,
When songs from on high shall fill the air,
And God to His glory take us,
When Jesus shall bid us rise from sleep—
How joyous that hour of awaking!"

Precious Savior, I thank Thee for this wondrous hope. Let its light ever shine in my heart, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Forty-Eighth Week: THE RESURRECTION

November 27. Christ's Power Over Death

Christ has life eternal in Himself and He has power to give it to others. In His raising of Lazarus He has given us an impressive and comforting demonstration of His power over death.

"Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time the body decayeth; for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou believedst, thou shouldest see the glory of God? So they took away the stone. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me. And when he ***had thus spoken, he cried, with a loud voice,*** *Lazarus, come forth. He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go"* (John 11:38-45).

In such a Savior we too may believe and be assured in our hearts that He will raise also us and our dear ones to eternal glory.

"He lives, He lives; though dust shall lie
Upon my mouldering head,
Yet He will call me, by and by,
To quit an earthy bed;
And I shall waken at His voice,
Rise re-embodied, and rejoice
To look on my Redeemer."

Help me to praise Thee, Lord Jesus, for Thy resurrection power. And may I so believe and so live that I may share in the joy of seeing Thee. In Thy name I pray. Amen.

Forty-Eighth Week: THE RESURRECTION

November 28. The Certainty of Christ's Resurrection

The hope of our resurrection is fundamentally based on Christ's own resurrection. Paul understood this clearly and marshalled, therefore, evidence to prove that, beyond any doubt, Jesus actually arose from the dead.

"Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas; then to the twelve; then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep; then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the child untimely born, he appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Cor. 15:1-11).

"Now let the heavens be joyful,
Let earth her song begin,
Let all the world keep triumph,
And all that is therein;
In grateful exultation,
Their notes let all things blend,
For Christ the Lord hath risen,
Our joy, that hath no end."

Yes, Jesus, we rejoice. We thank Thee for Thy triumphant victory. Amen.

Forty-Eighth Week: THE RESURRECTION

November 29. The Importance of Christ's Resurrection

After pointing out the certainty of Christ's resurrection, Paul goes on to speak of its tremendous significance for Christian faith.

"Now if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we witnessed of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised neither hath Christ been raised: and if Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sin. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable.

"But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom of God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death. For, He put all things in subjection under his feet" (1 Cor. 12-27).

With all the redeemed hosts we join, O Lord, in praising Thee.

"Hallelujah! Jesus lives!
He is now the living One;
From the gloomy house of death
Forth the Conqueror has gone,
Bright forerunner to the skies
Of His people, yet to rise.

"Jesus lives! let all rejoice!
Praise Him, ransomed ones of earth!
Praise Him in a nobler song,
Cherubim of heavenly birth!
Praise the Victor-King, whose sway
Sin, and death, and hell obey."—Amen.

Forty-Eighth Week: THE RESURRECTION

November 30. The Manner of Our Resurrection

"But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come? Thou foolish one, that which thou thyself sowest is not quickened except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other kind; but God giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. Howbeit that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; then that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is of heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. 15:35-49).

Help us, Dear Jesus, to trust in Thy mysterious power in our resurrection. We pray in Thy blessed name. Amen.

Forty-Eighth Week: THE RESURRECTION

December 1. The Living Translated

"But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thes. 4:13-18).

According to this revelation the believers who are living at the time of Christ's return shall not pass through the experience of death, but shall be directly translated into the glory of eternal life. Together with the risen dead who died in Christ, living Christians shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and be with Him forever.

"The day of resurrection,
Earth, tell it out abroad,
The Passover of gladness,
The Passover of God.
From death to life eternal,
From earth unto the sky,
Our Christ hath brought us over,
With hymns of victory."

Lord, we praise Thee for the wondrous expectation of seeing Thee. Help us to be always ready for Thy coming. We pray in Thy name. Amen.

Forty-Eighth Week: THE RESURRECTION

December 2. The Glory of Immortality

In a spirit of triumphant faith, Paul pictures the events of the great day of resurrection, the passing away of the Christians' mortal state, and the entrance upon the incorruptible glory of immortality.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:51-57).

"Wake, awake, for night is flying:
The watchmen on the heights are crying,
Awake, Jerusalem, arise!
Midnight's solemn hour is tolling,
His chariot wheels are nearer rolling:
He comes; prepare, ye virgins wise.
Rise up; with willing feet
Go forth, the Bridegroom meet;
Hallelujah!
Bear through the night your well-trimmed light,
Speed forth to join the marriage rite.

"Hear Thy praise, O Lord, ascending
From tongues of men and angels, blending
With harp and lute and psaltery.
By Thy pearly gates in wonder
We stand, and swell the voice of thunder,
In bursts of choral melody:
No vision ever brought.
No ear hath ever caught,
Such bliss and joy:
We raise the song, we swell the throng,
To praise Thee ages all along."—Amen.

Forty-Ninth Week: THE LAST JUDGMENT

December 3. A Universal Experience

The mention of Judgment Day sends a shudder through the frame of most people. And truly it is a sober topic. But it is a profitable subject to consider seriously. It has much to do in influencing our faith and our life.

In dealing with such a topic we should be particularly anxious to have sure ground under our feet. And the sure ground is God's own revelations and declarations. Let us listen to them.

The Word of God clearly teaches that in connection with the close of the present dispensation there shall be a final judgment.

There is first to be a resurrection of all men, both the godly and the ungodly.

"Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29).

That judgment is to be universal is also clearly set forth. No one will be exempt from appearance before the Lord's tribunal in that day.

"For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

We acknowledge, O Lord, Thy kingship over all creation. Make firm our faith in Thy absolute justice and righteousness. Grant that the thought of Thy righteous judgments may steady us in moments of temptation and cheer us in times of persecution. Give us grace to be ever watchful. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Forty-Ninth Week: THE LAST JUDGMENT

December 4. A Picture of the Judgment

Among the many revelations given the apostle John, was one of the Judgment which he has recorded for our instruction and meditation:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books. According to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it: and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:11-15).

"Great God, what do I see and hear!
The end of things created!
The Judge of mankind doth appear,
On clouds of glory seated;
The trumpet sounds; the graves restore
The dead which they contained before;
Prepare, my soul, to meet Him."

With humility we stand, O Lord, in Thy presence. We worship Thy power to raise the dead; we acknowledge that in Thy wisdom Thou knowest all our thoughts; we trust in Thy mercy to deliver us from eternal death through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Grant that on the Great Day our names may be found written in the book of life, and that we may be ushered into the eternal presence of our blessed Lord. Hear us for Christ's sake. Amen.

Forty-Ninth Week: THE LAST JUDGMENT

December 5. The Judge and the Standard

Who is to be the judge and according to what standard will he pronounce judgment? To these questions Jesus Himself has given answer.

"Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and greater works than these will he show him, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom he will. For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son; that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. . . And he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man" (John 5:19-23, 27).

Christ Himself is to be the Judge. But He will not act arbitrarily. He will pass judgment in accordance with His word.

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

The truth is that man really passes judgment on himself by the attitude he assumes towards Jesus Christ. Having come under the strength giving influence of the Spirit through the Word, by faith or unbelief, man determines his own destiny; and Christ's function as Judge is to establish the judgment forever.

O God, help us to realize the eternal consequence of our attitude to Thy revealed truth. Give us strength to overcome all obstacles that stand in the way and to embrace the salvation in Christ by a true and living faith. We ask it in His name. Amen.

Forty-Ninth Week: THE LAST JUDGMENT

December 6. The Manner of the Judgment

"But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or a thirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren even these least, ye did it unto me" (Matt. 25:31-40).

Does it not appear here that judgment is in accordance with works? What about salvation by grace? Truly man is judged *in accordance with* his works, for works are an outgrowth and an evidence of faith; but he is not saved *on account of* his works. He is saved by grace alone, as the Scriptures abundantly teach; but reward in judgment will be in accordance with his works as the Bible also clearly sets forth. *"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds"* (Matt. 16:27). *"Who will render to every man according to his works"* (Rom. 2:6).

We thank Thee, precious Jesus, that salvation is by grace, through faith in Thy redeeming work. Help us also to realize that reward in judgment is in relation to the fruits of faith. Make us very zealous in good works, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

December 7. The Judgment of Believers

Although all men must appear before the Judgment seat of God, the believers do not stand to be judged by the Law. They plead guilty of sin, but plead also the merits of Christ as their ground of salvation.

The Bible has some very remarkable things to say about this. Note this passage: *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life"* (John 5:24).

Isn't that wonderful? *"Cometh not into judgment."* None of the sins of the believing sinner shall be revealed on that day. They are all covered over by the righteousness of Christ, and the believer has nothing to fear. *"He that believeth on him is not judged"* (John 3:18). *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:1).

This is one of the greatest sources of comfort to the Christian in his contemplation of Judgment Day. As far as the question of his salvation is concerned he does not rest his hope upon himself and what he has done or not done. Such a procedure could result in condemnation only. But he comes in Jesus' name and presents Him only as his credentials for entering into glory.

So for the Christian, Judgment Day is not a cause of terror but a day of final sealing of his eternal deliverance from sin and death and of his entrance into eternal life in all its glorious fulness.

"O Christ, who diedst and yet dost live,
To me impart Thy merit:
My pardon seal, my sins forgive,
And cleanse me by Thy Spirit.
Beneath Thy cross I view the day
When heaven and earth shall pass away,
And thus prepare to meet Thee."—Amen.

December 8. The Judgment of the Ungodly

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the rightcous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:41-46).

The unbelievers, who have not accepted the offered salvation in Christ Jesus, cannot plead His grace to cover their sins, but must stand to be judged in their own merits or demerits. And not a single one shall be able to pass muster before the judgment seat of Christ, *"for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:23). The greatest of all sins is by unbelief to reject Christ as Savior, *"He that believeth not, hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God"* (John 3:18).

As to degree of punishment for the ungodly, that shall be determined in accordance with their light and works; we read: *"It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you"* (Luke 10:14).

Save us, O Lord, from unbelief and all sin, that the judgment of the ungodly may not come upon us. Help us by an abiding faith to accept Jesus Christ as our only Savior. Make us fruitful unto every good work, to the glory of Thy name. Amen.

December 9. Eternal Death

There are those who try to minimize the terribleness of the fate of the lost; but we have no right thus to take away anything from God's own declarations. These things have been revealed to us for our instruction and warning.

The condition of the lost is variously spoken of as "eternal punishment," "eternal destruction," "hell," "eternal death"; but whatever name is applied, a picture to make us shudder is summoned up before our minds.

Eternal death does not mean annihilation, but is a term employed to designate the absence of all good and the presence of all evil. It is the culmination after death of spiritual death here on earth. It is exclusion from the beatific sight of God, from heavenly rest and happiness, the separation from the society of godly people, the experiencing of unutterable regrets, despair, and unnamable anguish of body and soul.

And this condition, the Scriptures say, shall last forever. Jesus Himself says, *"These shall go away into eternal punishment"* (Matt. 25:46). Paul speaks of the lost as those *"who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might"* (2 Thess. 1:9).

Remember, friend, that it is the great love of God for mankind that has moved Him to speak these things to us in order that we may be warned and not bring upon ourselves so terrible a fate. He has opened to us in Jesus Christ a way of escape from the consequences of sin. Oh, that we might in all simplicity of faith accept salvation and enter into life.

"God calling yet!—shall I not hear?
Earth's pleasures shall I still hold dear?
Shall life's swift passing years all fly,
And still my soul in slumbers lie?

"God calling yet!—I cannot stay;
My heart I yield without delay;
Vain world, farewell! from thee I part;
The voice of God hath reached my heart!"

Lord Jesus, receive me, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.

December 10. Precious Words

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

Human imagination cannot picture the joy to be experienced by the redeemed saints of God when on the last day they shall hear these precious words.

"Come"—A gracious word of invitation. How different from the terrible *"Depart."* *"Blessed of my Father"*—Could a more beautiful expression be used to describe the children of God? To be blessed by men is gratifying; to be blessed by God is supreme good fortune. This blessedness comes through acceptance of Christ. *"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord"* (Rev. 14:13).

"Inherit the kingdom." Christians are princes and princesses of the Most High and as such are heirs of the kingdom of eternal life. How wonderful that we, creatures of the dust, are exalted to such dignity and glory!

"Prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Heaven is not an afterthought with God. Away back before the beginning of time God thought about us and planned blessedness for us. In spite of what He saw of unbelief, disobedience, and disloyalty in the human race, He thought out the wondrous plan of redemption through the Son, in order that in the last day He might take repentant and believing sinners to Himself in His kingdom.

"My God! how wonderful Thou art,
Thy majesty how bright!
How beautiful Thy mercy-seat
In depths of burning light!

"My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thou everlasting Friend!
On Thee I stay my trusting heart,
Till faith in vision end."—Amen.

Fiftieth Week: ETERNAL LIFE

December 11. The Heavenly Mansions

The Bible is full of rich imagery in its treatment of the great theme of Heaven. Jesus Himself has given us a beautiful picture: *"Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also"* (John 14:1-3).

Heaven is home to the child of God. It is the Father's house. What traveler has not experienced thrills of joy at the thought of coming home? At home there is love, there is understanding, there is protection, there is fellowship. And heaven is much more wonderful than any earthly home. An old Aberdeen preacher was comforted, a century ago, by a little personal incident. He had always feared death, and was powerless to comfort others facing it. Towards the end of his life he moved from his house to a new one. Yet when the furniture had all gone, the old preacher lingered in the home where his children had been born and where his sermons had been prepared. At last his servant came to him and said, "Sir, everything's gone; and the new house is better than this one. Come away." It preached to him a lesson which he never forgot.

"I'm but a stranger here,
Heaven is my home;
Earth is a desert drear,
Heaven is my home,
Danger and sorrow stand
Round me on every hand,
Heaven is my fatherland,
Heaven is my home.

"There, at my Savior's side,
Heaven is my home;
May I be glorified,
Heaven is my home;
And time's wild wintry blast
Soon shall be overpast,
I shall reach home at last;
Heaven is my home."

Help us, Father, to reach home. Amen.

Fiftieth Week: ETERNAL LIFE

December 12. The Vision of God

Many elements are included in the conception "Eternal Life." We might mention "man's complete deliverance from sin and all its consequences, the bringing to perfection of the work of grace in this life, the attainment of all the divine purposes in man's creation." But perhaps the most joyous element of the blessedness of heaven will be the vision of God. This thought looms large in the seers' visions of heaven. David sings:

"As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with beholding thy form" (Ps. 17:15).

Jesus prays: *"Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world"* (John 17:24).

Paul prophesies: *"Now we see in a mirror darkly; but then face to face"* (1 Cor. 13:12).

A story is told of a poor boy in London. His parents were dead, and he was in charge of a terrible, drunken woman, who forced him to beg, and met him with kicks and cuffs if he brought her too little. His greatest pleasure in life was to see the beautiful things exhibited in shop windows. He knew, though, that these things were not meant for him, for there was always the glass between. He was especially attracted to some lead soldiers, but—there was the glass. One day he was run over, carried to the hospital, and cared for by Christian charity. He awoke to find himself in a snow-white cot, and looking into the pleasant face of a nurse. A few days passed, and then to his astonishment he saw other children playing with toys. Soon he too sat up in bed, propped up by pillows, and, wonder of wonders, at his hand was a box of lead soldiers. Slowly he stretched his hand out, touched them, and cried out: "There is no glass between."

Dear Jesus, grant us the unclouded vision of Thee. Amen.

Fiftieth Week: ETERNAL LIFE

December 13. The Crown

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

The "cross" and the "crown" are familiar symbols of earthly suffering and heavenly triumph. The crown betokens victory over all the enemies of the soul which on earth threatened to rob the Christian of his hold upon life.

The venerable Peter saw the afflictions of the early Christians, and, for their encouragement, held out, in expressive language, this hope of final victory in the presence of God: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls"* (1 Peter 1:3-9).

"From all Thy saints in warfare,
For all Thy saints at rest,
To Thee, O blessed Jesus,
All praises be addressed.
Thou, Lord, didst win the battle,
That they might conquerors be;
Their crowns of living glory
Are lit with rays from Thee."

Sustain us, O Lord, upon our way by this wondrous expectation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Fiftieth Week: ETERNAL LIFE

December 14. The Great White Host

"After these things I saw, and behold, a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels were standing round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These that are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, these are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev. 7:9-17).

"Behold a host, arrayed in white,
Like thousand snow-clad mountains bright,
With palms they stand—who are this band
Before the throne of Light?
Lo, these are they, of glorious fame,
Who from the great affliction came
And in the flood of Jesus' blood
Are cleansed from guilt and blame;
Now gathered in the holy place
Their voices they in worship raise,
Their anthems swell where God doth dwell,
'Mid angels' songs of praise."

Praise be unto God forever and ever. Amen.

Fiftieth Week: ETERNAL LIFE

December 15. The New Heaven and the New Earth

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith, Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:1-7).

"Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice oppress.
I know not, Oh, I know not,
What joys await us there,
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare.

"They stand, those halls of Zion
All jubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel,
And all the martyr throng;
The Prince is ever in them,
The daylight is serene,
The pastures of the blessed
Are decked in glorious sheen."

Bless upon our hearts, O Lord, the wondrous vision. Amen.

Fiftieth Week: ETERNAL LIFE

December 16. The Holy City

John's vision continues:

"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. . . . And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the several gates was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof: and the kings of the earth bring their glory into it. And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day (for there shall be no night there): and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:10-14, 21-27).

"O sweet and blessed country,
The home of God's elect!
O sweet and blessed country
That eager hearts expect!
Jesus, in mercy bring us
To that dear land of rest;
Who art, with God the Father
And Spirit, ever blest."—Amen.

Fifty-First Week: THE COMING OF CHRISTMAS

December 17. Preparations

We are approaching the season of Christmas. The mere mention of the name crowds the soul with joyous emotions. As far back as our memory goes the thought of the coming of Christmas has quickened our heart beats with expectancies. It is a time of home-coming, of festivals, of gifts, of good things to eat, of pleasant sociability.

In preparation for it streets are decorated, stores display their attractive wares, and people crowd the counters. In the home housewives clean and scrub, cook and bake, plan and execute, in a hundred ways.

If Christmas is to have for us its largest significance, there must be also a preparation of the soul. For this purpose we do well to listen to the ringing message of John the Baptist.

"And he came into all the region round about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

The voice of one crying in the wilderness,
Make ye ready the way of the Lord,
Make his paths straight,
Every valley shall be filled,
And every mountain and hill skall be brought low;
And the crooked shall become straight,
And the rough ways smooth;
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God"
(Luke 3:3-6).

Let there be an examination of our needs, a humbling of our pride, a strengthening of our sincerity, a reassurance of our faith.

Dear Jesus, we thank Thee for the coming of Christmas. Wilt Thou prepare our hearts for its wondrous message, for Thy love's sake. Amen.

Fifty-First Week: THE COMING OF CHRISTMAS

December 18. A Long Expected Event

The coming of Christ into the world and His redemptive work constitute events of paramount significance in the annals of the world. Christ stands at the very center of history. In silent but impressive testimony of this fact, we date all events either "Before Christ" or "After Christ."

The event of Christ's birth was looked forward to through many, long years of watchful expectancy. Dimly at first, but more and more clearly, the Spirit-directed prophets saw the day of the Messiah's coming.

Let us look at a few of the more specific prophecies. Here is one of the most remarkable: *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"* (Is. 7:14).

It is passing strange, we must admit, that so unlikely an event as a virgin birth should have been foreseen and prophesied hundreds of years before the event took place; and yet, it came to pass exactly as written.

The word "Immanuel" is one of the most colorful names of our Savior. Signifying "God is with us," it brings to us the stimulating thought of the nearness of God. It connotes also God's great interest in the human race and His concern for its welfare. He would not leave us alone, but came to us in visible form to assure us of His saving love.

"Thou, whose coming seers and sages
Long foretold to Israel,
Has appeared in these last ages,
Jesus Christ, Immanuel.
O thou precious day of grace,
Fraught with blessings to our race!
None need now despair of pardon,
Bowed beneath a hopeless burden."

Gracious Immanuel, we thank Thee for Thy revelation of God for the salvation of sinful men. Amen.

December 19. A Righteous King

The prophets see various phases of the Messiah's character and work. Here is a picture of the King: *"And there shall come forth a shoot out of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit: and the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah; and his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins"* (Is. 11:1-5).

On the human side, Jesus came of the line of David. Royal blood flowed in His veins. But He is far more than an earthly monarch. He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Ruler of the kingdom of truth.

His reign shall be absolutely righteous for all. The godly may rejoice in His dominion, but the wicked have all reason to tremble in His presence. He judges according to truth.

"Rise, children of the kingdom!
The King is drawing nigh;
Arise, and hail with gladness
The Ruler from on high.
Ye Christians, hasten forth!
Your praise and homage bring Him,
And glad Hosannas sing Him;
Naught else your love is worth."

We thank Thee, Jesus, for Thy righteousness. Help us to put all our trust in Thee. Amen.

Fifty-First Week: THE COMING OF CHRISTMAS

December 20. The Deliverer

In a magnificent passage the Messiah is represented as speaking of Himself and His redemptive mission among men: *"The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me; because Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the year of Jehovah's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them a garland for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Jehovah, that he may be glorified"* (Is. 61:1-3).

No better comment on this revelation can be offered than Wesley's precious hymn. Let us make it a prayer, in Jesus' name.

"Come, Thou long-expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

"Born Thy people to deliver;
Born a child, and yet a king;
Born to reign in us for ever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring,
By Thine own eternal Spirit,
Rule Thou in our hearts alone;
By Thine all-sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne."

Amen.

Fifty-First Week: THE COMING OF CHRISTMAS

December 21. The Annunciation to Mary

When the Lord's time of waiting was fulfilled, the message came to the virgin Mary that she was to be the mother of the Savior: *"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee. But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God. . . And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her"* (Luke 1:26-35, 38).

> "Love drew Thee down, the world to win
> From common stain of common sin;
> Proceeding from a virgin shrine
> The spotless victim all divine."

Help us to praise Thee, Lord Jesus, for the miracle of Thy incarnation. Let us find great comfort in the thought that Thou dost share our humanity. In Thy name we pray. Amen.

December 22. Mary's Song of Praise

On the visit to her relative Elisabeth, Mary obtained through Elisabeth's inspired words a clearer comprehension, it seems, of the message the angel had brought to her. It was then that her soul burst forth into that wonderful song of praise that has become a treasured possession of the Christian church.

"And Mary said,
My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For he hath looked upon the low estate of his handmaid:
For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;
And holy is his name.
And his mercy is unto generations and generations
On them that fear him.
He hath showed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart.
He hath put down princes from their thrones,
And hath exalted them of low degree,
The hungry he hath filled with good things;
And the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath given help to Israel his servant,
That he might remember mercy
(As he spake unto our fathers)
Toward Abraham and his seed for ever" (Luke 1:46-55).

We thank Thee, Lord, for the character and faith of Mary. Help us, too, to experience the joy of a triumphant faith. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifty-First Week: THE COMING OF CHRISTMAS

December 23. The Son of Zacharias

Another beautiful advent song is the prophetic utterance of Zacharias, when speech was restored to him after the birth of his son John.

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
For he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people,
And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of his servant David
(As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old),
Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us,
To show mercy towards our fathers,
And to remember his holy covenant;
The oath which he sware unto Abraham our father.
To grant unto us that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies
Should serve him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before him all our days.
Yea and thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High:
For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways;
To give knowledge of salvation unto his people
In the remission of their sins,
Because of the tender mercy of our God,
Whereby the day spring from on high shall visit us,
To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death;
To guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:68-79).

Make ready our hearts, O Lord, for the days of festivity when we commemorate the coming of our Savior King. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifty-Second Week: THE WONDROUS LOVE OF GOD

December 24. The Holy Night

It is Christmas Eve. There is but one subject appropriate for meditation at this holy time—the precious story from Bethlehem.

"Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria. And all went to enrol themselves, every one to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David; to enrol himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child. And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

"And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger, And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2: 1-14).

"Silent night! peaceful night!
Darkness flies, and all is light!
Shepherds hear the angels sing;
'Hallelujah! hail the King!
Jesus the Savior is here.
Jesus the Savior is here!' "

Praised be the name of our Lord forever and ever. Amen.

Fifty-Second Week: THE WONDROUS LOVE OF GOD

December 25. God's Great Gift

"Herein was the love of God manifested in us, that God hath sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9-10).

The message of Christmas will ever be good news to men, women, and children in every place where it is proclaimed, for it tells of the immeasurable love of God to sinful humanity.

Surely by our unbelief and disobedience we had not deserved anything good from the Lord. But He is a wonderful God. Our distress in sin touched the heart strings of His compassion, and He sent us the most precious and perfect gift, His only Son, to be our Savior.

The resources of language, music, and painting have been drawn upon to celebrate this transcendent event. The souls of redeemed men have overflowed in gratitude for this superlative proof of God's wondrous love.

The songs of Christmas praise will continue to ring out in the world as long as time shall last, and then strains of more perfect fulness will be resumed in eternal glory.

"Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
Let the earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

"He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love."

With the redeemed saints of all times we join, O Lord, in praise of Thy eternal love. Amen.

Fifty-Second Week: THE WONDROUS LOVE OF GOD

December 26. The Adoration of the Shepherds

Indelibly associated with the Christmas scene is the worshipful visit of the shepherds to the Bethlehem manger: *"And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger. And when they saw it, they made known concerning the saying which was spoken to them about this child. And all that heard it wondered at the things which were spoken unto them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken unto them"* (Luke 2:15-20).

How the significance of the Christmas story has been heightened by the fact that the glad tidings were first announced to the lowly shepherds and that they were the first to see and adore the Christ child! It brings to the humblest sons of men everywhere assurance that they, too, have a share in God's great gift of love.

"O holy child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in;
Be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Immanuel!"

Accept, O Lord, our grateful praise for Thy humble birth. Help, O Lord, both great and small to believe that they have a share in Thee. We pray in Thy Savior name. Amen.

Fifty-Second Week: THE WONDROUS LOVE OF GOD

December 27. The Visit of the Wise Men

Prophetic of the drawing power of God's love in Christ is the coming of the Wise Men of the East to worship the newly born King: *"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, Wise-men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we saw his star in the east, and are come to worship him. And when Herod the king heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written through the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah, art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: For out of thee shall come forth a governor, Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel. Then Herod privily called the Wise-men, and learned of them exactly what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search out exactly concerning the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word, that I also may come and worship him. And they, having heard the king, went their way; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way"* (Matt. 2:1-12).

"As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee." **Amen.**

Fifty-Second Week: THE WONDROUS LOVE OF GOD

December 28. The Song of Simeon

Another priceless picture associated with God's love gift to the world brings before us the aged Simeon in the temple, tenderly holding the Christ-child in his arms.

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law, then he received him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord, According to thy word, in peace; For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; A light for revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:25-32).

Through long years, Simeon had waited for the Savior. Now he had been blessed with the privilege of seeing Him, and his happiness was complete. Ready now to pass on into the fuller realization of God's love, he prays his trusting sunset prayer.

"O Savior, precious Savior,
Whom yet unseen we love,
O Name of might and favor,
All other names above!
We worship Thee, we bless Thee,
To Thee, O Christ, we sing;
We praise Thee, and confess Thee
Our holy Lord and King.

"O Bringer of Salvation,
Who wondrously hast wrought,
Thyself the revelation
Of love beyond our thought:
We worship Thee, we bless Thee,
To Thee, O Christ, we sing;
We praise Thee, and confess Thee
Our gracious Lord and King." **Amen.**

Fifty-Second Week: THE WONDROUS LOVE OF GOD

December 29. Inventory Time

The end of the year is drawing near. The season compels us to think back over the past months and ask ourselves, how have we spent this year of grace? It is a time for earnest self examination, for inventory, for appraisal. Each one of us does well to pray the psalmist's prayer:

"Search me, O God, and know my heart:
Try me, and know my thoughts;
And see if there be any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23-24).

The theme of the psalm of which these words are the closing portion is the omnipresence and omniscience of God.

It is impossible to hide anything from Him. We may deceive men and sometimes, perhaps, even ourselves, but we cannot deceive God. The part of wisdom is to let the searchlight of God fall upon our hearts and lives to reveal clearly what is there. We shall no doubt find much that is unlovely, much that displeases, and much that pains us.

But as we look back upon our sins, our failures, and our shortcomings of this past year, let us also look into God's heart of love. We shall there find compassion for repentant sinners, a ready pardon for those who come pleading for grace in Jesus' name. So during these closing days of the year let there be much of prayer for mercy for wrongs committed and for good deeds undone.

"Not in anger, mighty God,
Not in anger smite us.
We must perish if Thy rod
Justly should requite us.
We are naught,
Sin hath brought,
Lord, Thy wrath upon us,
Yet have mercy on us!" **Amen.**

Fifty-Second Week: THE WONDROUS LOVE OF GOD

December 30. God's Patience

"And he spake this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none. And he said unto the vine dresser, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground? And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down" (Luke 13:6-9).

God is wonderfully good and patient. Let your mind go back over the past year and over all the rest of your years, and enumerate, if you can, all the blessings you have received from Him: food, clothing, shelter, education, friendships, enjoyments, grace abundant every day. What have you given God in return? What sort of fruit have you borne?

Surely, God must be disappointed. But the fact that you are still living is proof of God's loving patience. He gives you still another chance.

Will you not as this year ebbs away highly resolve that, by God's help and grace, you will bear more and better fruit in the coming year? It is a terrible prospect to be cut down as a fruitless tree.

"Keep us faithful, keep us pure,
Keep us evermore Thine own;
Help, O help us to endure;
Fit us for the promised crown."

Gracious Lord, we thank Thee for Thy patience. Forgive Thou in mercy all our sins and shortcomings. Give us a steadfast purpose to honor Thee more consistently in the coming year. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Fifty-Second Week: THE WONDROUS LOVE OF GOD

December 31. Praise at the End

And now let us bring our year's walk with God to a close with a song of grateful praise.

"Bless Jehovah, O my soul;
And all that is within me, bless his holy name.
Bless Jehovah, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases;
Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;
Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies;
Who satisfieth thy desire with good things,
So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.
Jehovah is merciful and gracious,
Slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness.
He will not always chide;
Neither will he keep his anger for ever.
He hath not dealt with us after our sins,
Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
So great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him.
As far as the east is from the west,
So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
Like as a father pitieth his children,
So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.
Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens;
And his kingdom ruleth over all.
Bless Jehovah, ye his angels,
That are mighty in strength, that fulfil his word.
Hearkening unto the voice of his word.
Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts,
Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.
Bless Jehovah, all ye his works,
In all places of his dominion:
Bless Jehovah, O my soul" (Ps. 103:1-5, 8-13, 19-22).

Amen, in Jesus' name, Amen.

May 30. MEMORIAL DAY

"What mean ye by these stones?" (Joshua 4:6).

The annual observance of Memorial Day serves to remind us of what our liberties and privileges have cost the generations that have gone before us. The music and the marching, the speaking and the singing, the flowers and the flags symbolize the gratitude that goes out from our hearts to the nation's honored dead. They also make eloquent our appreciation of those who fought and lived and who by their sound patriotism have helped to keep alive a sense of our profound indebtedness.

No one can know the cost of the universal privileges of citizenship in a land such as ours. It comprises not only the lives that were snuffed out in battle or mained by cruel wounds or wasting disease. To get something of an adequate conception we must count the heartaches of wives and children, mothers and lovers; the deprivation of the necessities of life by the removal of breadwinners; the losses to the virility of the nation by the cutting off of its picked men.

Surely we must regard as precious a heritage of such fearful cost. The spirit of Memorial Day should therefore be a spirit of thanksgiving to God for His gift of brave men to the nation, a spirit of grateful reverence to past generations the fruits of whose sacrifices we are privileged to enjoy. But the day should mark also a high dedication to the preservation of our blessings, by a deep devotion to the cause of peace, by a profound loyalty to the constitution, and by conscientious observance of the laws of the land.

A little thoughtful meditation upon the struggles and sufferings of the past should make us better citizens and more loyal to that flag which symbolizes so much of the idealism of America.

God of our fathers, we thank Thee for our civic heritage. Make us grateful in our remembrance of past sacrifices. Help us to preserve our blessings in the future. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

July 4. INDEPENDENCE DAY

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Ps. 33:12).

The recurrence of Independence Day should stimulate the emotions of patriotism. In the Roman temple of Vesta there burned continuously a sacred fire tended by the vestal virgins. The safety of the city was supposed to depend upon this fire; hence it was watched and tended with the greatest vigilance. Vain superstition we say, yet how strikingly symbolic of the necessity of keeping alive the love of country in the hearts of our people.

Many misconceptions cluster around the word patriotism. Offering a salute as the flag goes by, rising to the feet when the band plays the "Star Spangled Banner," displaying the flag in homes, schools, and places of business are all appropriate expressions of our attitude, but they by no means exhaust the requirements of true patriotism.

Neither is the exercise of patriotism limited to times of war. There are "battles of peace" every bit as significant, every bit as difficult, and every bit as testing as actual struggles on fields of blood. Honesty in private life and public office; obedience to laws whether we personally like them or not; striving for a square deal for everybody whether rich or poor; the intelligent and faithful exercise of the right of suffrage; the dutiful industry of common toil in the earning of an honest living—all these are significant expressions of that kind of patriotism which looks to the welfare and perpetuity of the state.

The true patriot loves his country too much to cheat it; he loves it too much to uphold it in any wrong; he loves it too much to refuse his best service whenever needed.

That person is the best citizen who is the best Christian.

Dear God, make us grateful for our country and the liberties we enjoy as gifts from Thee. Teach us true patriotism and give us in our hearts a steadfast purpose to serve our country in a spirit of integrity, loyalty, and sacrifice. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

November 11. ARMISTICE DAY

Jesus said, *"My peace I give unto you"* (John 14:27).

Only those who were old enough to understand something of its deep significance will remember the profound sense of relief that came over the world on that blessed eleventh day of November, in 1918. Since that day vast movements have been set afoot in the interests of permanent world peace, and significant progress has been made.

The creation of a will to peace results from a consistent teaching and acceptance of the religion of the Prince of peace. This is no mere dream. It is inherent in the very nature of Christianity which in its ethical implications is summed up in that pregnant command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

A missionary once said: "I have been laboring among a people who once delighted in war, but since Christianity has prevailed there, war has ceased altogether. The last Sabbath I spent with them I went into one of their chapels and preached to a congregation of fifteen hundred persons. A rude sort of pulpit was erected with stairs leading up to it, the railings of which, smooth and polished, were literally made of the handles of warriors' spears by those who had transferred themselves, with their weapons of war, to a nobler and better purpose—the service of the Lord."

This, on a small scale, strikingly illustrates the working of the leaven of the religion of Christ. If the nations would enthrone Him as King in their hearts and as Lord in the determining of international relations, there can be no question but that the cause of peace would be tremendously advanced. The vision of the prophet was no idle dream. May the Lord hasten the day when the power of the Christ shall so dominate men's lives that even on this earth men "Shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks," when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Dear Lord Jesus, Thou Prince of peace, wilt Thou plant understanding and love in the hearts of men that Thy kingdom may come among us. Amen.